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ABSTRACT

The Society and Mass Media section of the proceedings contains the following 16 papers: "The Relationship of Mass Media and Interpersonal Channels to Societal and Personal Risk Judgments" (Cynthia-Lou Coleman); "Freedom of Expression: How Much Will the Public Tolerate?" (Daniel Riffe and Charles F. Aust); "Economic Recession and the News" (Robert L. Stevenson and others); "Sources, 'Quotas,' and Civil Rights: The Press and the Civil Rights Act of 1990" (Carol M. Liebler); "News Sources and News Context: The Effect of Routine News, Conflict, and Proximity" (Dan Berkowitz and Douglas W. Beach); "Audience Recall of News Stories Presented by Newspaper, Computer, Television and Radio" (Melvin DeFleur and others); "Mass Media Salary and Status Surveys Fail to Reflect Magazine Research through 1989" (Sammye Johnson); "The Third-Person Effect and Support for Restrictions on Pornography" (Albert C. Gunther); "All the News That's Fit to Sell: Selection Bias in Commercial News Organizations" (John McManus); "The Cracked Mirror: An Imperfect Case of Press Self-Examination" (Fiona A. E. McQuarrie); "The Media and Covenant House: Did the Dream End in a Nightmare?" (Phyllis Zagano); "To Tell the Truth: Codes of Objectivity in Photojournalism" (Dona Schwartz); "News Council Complainants: Who Are They and What Do They Want?" (Louise Williams Hermanson); "Allegations about Sexually Explicit Materials and Attitudes toward Controversial Media Contents" (David K. Perry and Joseph Plumley); "Gender-Based Differences in Attitudes towards Stories: An Examination of Maryland Editors" (Donna M. Bertazzoni); and "On Naming Rape Victims: How Editors Stand on the Issue" (Samuel P. Winch). (PRA)

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THE RELATIONSHIP OF MASS MEDIA & INTERPERSONAL CHANNELS TO SOCIETAL AND PERSONAL RISK JUDGMENTS

Cynthia-Lou Coleman
University of Wisconsin, Madison

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Student Division,
Communication Theory and Methodology
Association for Education in
Journalism and Mass Communication

ABSTRACT

This study investigates dual aspects of risk judgments -- on the personal dimension and societal dimension -- and their association with mass mediated information and interpersonal communication.

New York State residents were surveyed in this 1990 mail questionnaire concerning their judgment of the following risks: heart disease, AIDS, smoking, low-level radioactive waste, radon, contaminated water, contaminated food, and household cleaners. Overall, respondents felt that others are more vulnerable to these risks than they are personally. Factor analysis revealed one dimension for personal-level risk judgment, and two dimensions for societal-level risk judgment: voluntary and involuntary.

Mass media use predicted societal-level judgments, in support of the health communication literature. Contrary to typical findings, however, mass media also predicted personal-level risk judgment. Interpersonal communication predicted societal-level risk only.

OVERVIEW

The bulk of the current mass communication literature espouses a limited effects model -- that is, messages have only limited influences on some groups of people or individuals under certain circumstances. And it's been nearly two decades since McLeod and Becker (1974) observed that the hypodermic needle metaphor of mass communication effects had been laid to rest beneath a mound of rhetoric.

Still, the popular theory of powerful effects continues to persist in some risk theory circles. Literature from the risk management arena reveals that technicians, engineers and hazard experts seem to believe that communication of scientific information via mass-mediated channels will result in informed, rational publics (Blackburn & Reed, 1985.) On the other hand, some believe that information about risks conveyed in the mass media results in poorly informed, distrustful, and even hysterical publics (Kasperson, Renn, Slovic, Brown, Emel, Goble, Kasperson & Ratick, 1988; Mazur, 1989.)

In order to better understand how publics respond to mass mediated and interpersonally conveyed risk information, it is important to explain what is meant by risk perception and risk communication. The current investigation addresses the following research questions:

1. How do publics perceive risks? Is risk perception unidimensional?

2. How are risks conveyed, and what role do mass media and interpersonal communication play in shaping risk perception?
3. Do aggregated publics (the elderly, women, etc.) respond differentially in their perception of risks? Do such publics use health and risk information differentially?
4. What role do personality variables play in shaping risk perception?

Influences on Risk Judgment

Risk perception is a rather vague term, one which typically encompasses: how people think about risks, how people feel about risks, or how people judge themselves' and others' vulnerability to risks. Dunwoody & Neuwirth (1991) prefer the term risk judgment to describe the relationship between how individuals use information and the effects of that information on two intrapersonal dimensions: cognitive and affective. Simply stated, the cognitive dimension of risk judgment is conceptualized as how individuals assess their likelihood of coming to harm, or their vulnerability to risk. The concern, worry or dread people feel about risks is conceptualized on the affective dimension.

A further refinement of risk judgment has been proposed by Tyler & Cook (1984), who advanced the Impersonal Impact Hypothesis. Briefly, Tyler & Cook report that individuals distinguish between risk judgments about society-at-large, and risks that impact them personally. The authors proposed that individuals compartmentalize risks in two, separate mental bins: societal-level and personal-level.

Thus, the risk judgment model might be described as pyramid-shaped, with risk judgment located at the summit. Sloping down from risk judgment are "affective" and "cognitive" dimensions, each which can be further divided into "personal-level" and "societal-level" domains.

Many studies in the past decade have supported the Impersonal Impact Hypothesis (Pilisuk & Acredolo, 1987; Culbertson & Stempel, 1985), but few researchers have distinguished between the affective and cognitive dimensions on risk. As a result, risk communication studies are difficult to generalize, due to inconsistent definitions (and operationalizations) of risk perception and judgment.

Communication Channels

Another thorny problem arises in the conceptualization of mass and interpersonal communication. Some researchers employ a top-down persuasion model in describing communication effects on risk judgments: a sender delivers a message over specific channels with effects on audiences. Dunwoody & Neuwirth instead embrace a more circular model, in which an active audience seeks information judged as relevant, forms judgments, seeks information, and so on. This implies a process model, rather than a stimulus-response scenario. Individuals are seen as seeking relevant information throughout their lifetime over a variety of channels. This is conceptually similar to the information-seeking model proposed by Atkin (1973), in which individuals are described as seeking information for a variety of reasons (to form opinions, to accomplish a behavior, etc.) over four, distinct dimensions. Other factors which are brought to bear in the information-seeking process include such intrapersonal variables as message processing style and prior experience (Donohew & Tipton, 1973.) Conceivably, self-efficacy might also be linked to information-seeking behavior.

Whether survey research or experiments are employed, both types of studies have demonstrated that impacts of mass and interpersonal communication on risk judgment are rather meager. Demographic and personality variables are more robust predictors of risk judgment. And, although the findings show that mediated channels do not always provide substantial associations with risk judgment, we cannot deny that limited effects do occur. Clearly, we need to better understand the relationship between how people think and feel about risks -- the cognitive and affective dimensions -- and the type of information they pursue (Dunwoody & Neuwirth.)

Studies have also sought to describe the relationship between mass and interpersonal channels of risk communication, and several suppositions can be made. For example, Dunwoody & Neuwirth note that mass media should be more influential in shaping cognitive, rather than affective risk judgments. This parallels the agenda-setting literature, which has attempted to demonstrate linkages between public opinion and salient news items. This reasoning also undergirds Weinstein's (1987) seminal work on optimistic bias, which demonstrated that individuals tend to underrate their own vulnerability to harm but judge others' susceptibility as greater than their own. From a risk judgment viewpoint, this hypothesis asserts that individuals distinguish between the societal and personal dimensions in a cognitive vein.

Slovic, Fischhoff & Lichtenstein (1987) attempted to illustrate the relationship between mediated information and optimistic bias, concluding that rare events -- which capture the attention of mass media gatekeepers -- result in an overestimation of catastrophic risks on the part of lay publics. In contrast, risks judged as "normal," certain diseases, and voluntary risks seem to carry less weight on the public (and media) agendas than extraordinary or dreaded events.

As for interpersonal communication, findings are mixed. Mazur & Hall (1990) report that interpersonal discussion and mass media use were associated with societal-level risk judgments but not with personal risk judgments, while Dunwoody & Neuwirth found interpersonal communication a better predictor of risk judgments (both cognitive and affective) than mass media use. Chaffee (1979) has argued against the traditional view that interpersonal communication should be more persuasive than mass communication, pointing out that individuals will seek information across a variety of channels without necessarily weighing personal communication more heavily. Still, common sense and everyday experiences seem to suggest that information from impersonal, mass mediated sources may be less salient and therefore weighted differently than personal, face-to-face communication.

The Role of Self-Efficacy

Evidently, judgments about risks defy simplistic explanation, and such judgments appear to be shaped by a variety of both internal and external factors. Clearly, mass media and interpersonal discussion do exert influence over such judgments, but other variables undoubtedly determine risk judgments, including personal experience, personality or other intrapersonal factors.

One intrapersonal characteristic that has been widely examined is self-efficacy. Attention has been focused in recent years on the role of self-efficacy -- the extent to which individuals believe they can control behavior or outcomes -- in the health communication field. Briefly, researchers have proposed a linear relationship between efficacy, beliefs and behavior. Generally speaking, those with a high sense of control over their behavior (high efficacy) believe they can effect health behaviors, and do appear to engage in less risky behaviors than those low in self-efficacy (for a review, see Litt, 1988.)

HYPOTHESES

The current study examined the relationship between risk judgment (on a cognitive vein) and communication channels. In addition, the role of demographic variables and self-efficacy is also explored.

While the literature leads us to surmise that risk judgment is a process (rather than the effect of a multitude of causes) the study examines only a segment of this process. Specifically, we are interested in whether communication channels influence judgment on the personal and social dimensions of risk perception; under what circumstances this might occur, and whether certain channels offer greater predictive power over others. Readers should bear in mind that, risk judgment may also predict media use, but that issue will be saved for a future study.

We have considered the following hypotheses:

> Hypothesis 1. Individuals will judge risks differentially, assessing others' susceptibility as significantly greater than their own.
>
> Hypothesis 2. High self-efficacy will be associated with low risk judgment after controlling for demographic effects.
>
> Hypothesis 3. High interpersonal discussion will be positively associated with personal-level risk judgments after controlling for demographic effects.
>
> Hypothesis 4. Interpersonal discussion will have no association with societal-level risk judgments after controlling for demographic effects.
>
> Hypothesis 5. High use of mass-mediated information will be positively associated with societal-level risk judgments after controlling for demographic effects.
>
> Hypothesis 6. Use of mass mediated information will have no association with personal-level risk judgments after controlling for the effects of demographic variables.

DESIGN & METHODS

A mail survey was conducted in 1990 to a random sample of U.S. residents of a Mid-Atlantic state, with 1,500 households contacted initially. After two reminders, 671 completed questionnaires were obtained, yielding a 45 percent response rate. (Please see the Appendix for the survey questions.)

Risk Judgment

In order to tap cognitive risk judgment, respondents were asked to rate their likelihood of coming to harm on eight topics: heart disease, AIDS, smoking, low-level radioactive waste, radon, contaminated water, residues on food, and household cleaners.

To distinguish personal from societal risk judgments, two sets of questions were asked:

> How likely do you think it is that **your health** will be affected by the following problems sometime in the future? (personal)
>
> and
>
> How likely do you think it is that the following will be very serious problems for **our country** in the future? (societal)

Responses were measured on a six-part Likert-type scale, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." High codes reflect high risk judgment.

An exploratory factor analysis, using Maximum Likelihood extraction, was run on all eight variables for Personal Risk judgment. The Cattell Scree Test clearly showed one factor, and Kaiser's Rule was used to determine that one factor should be retained: only one had an eigenvalue greater than 1 (eigenvalue= 3.86), which initially accounted for 48 percent of the variance. To confirm the prudence of creating an index for personal risk, a reliability test was run on the summative scale of all eight variables. Cronbach's alpha of .83 was obtained, which was judged as adequate. Finally, a weighted scale comprised of the factor scores was computed for use in the correlation and regression analyses. [All reliability test results are available in the Appendix.]

[Table 1]

The initial factor analysis for societal-level risk revealed two factors with initial eigenvalues greater than 1 (3.88 and 1.05), although the scree test was somewhat ambiguous. One of the items was difficult to interpret: the low-level radioactive waste variable loaded equally on both factors in the orthogonal and oblique rotations, and the loadings were substantially lower than the other items. As a result, the variable was dropped, and the factor analysis was rerun without low-level radioactive waste. Again, two factors emerged with eigenvalues greater than 1 (3.42 and 1.06), and the new scree plot was less ambiguous, with the "scree" beginning at the third factor. The varimax rotation revealed two factors, one which included risk for food, cleaners, water and radon, the other for heart disease, AIDS and smoking.

This dichotomy seems to suggest a "voluntary" and "involuntary" factor. It may be that people perceive such risks as heart disease, AIDS and smoking as internal, controllable or voluntary, while contaminants in water and on food, indoor radon and household cleaners may be perceived as outside one's control. Reliability tests showed that the clusters "held together." [See Appendix.] Weighted indexes were then computed for each dimension using factor scores for the Voluntary and Involuntary scales. (See Table 1.)

***Media Variables*.** Twenty-two media questions were asked with the aim of tapping respondents' use of newspapers, magazines, television and books related to news, health, risk, science, medicine, nutrition and the environment. Media-entertainment questions were not used in the analysis, based on the view that entertainment content is unrelated to news content (Rubin, 1983, and McDonald, 1990). Respondents were asked how frequently they read and watched information in the health-risk categories, with such typical questions as:

> How often do you read articles in your newspaper about the following?
>
> - Community news
> - National/world news
> - Environment
> - Health/medical
> - Food/nutrition

Answers were recorded on a four-part Likert-type scale, anchored at each end with "almost never" and "five or more times per week." Similar questions were asked for magazine, book and television use. [The survey questionnaire is available in the Appendix.]

All media variables were then subjected to an exploratory factor analysis using Maximum Likelihood extraction and orthogonal rotations. The preliminary analysis revealed six factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, but the scree test was ambiguous. Moreover, the sixth factor was not interpretable, indicating that too many factors may have been extracted, a frequent occurrence with Kaiser's Rule (Zwick & Velicer, 1986.)

A second factor analysis was run, this time restricting the extraction to five factors. The five rotated factors made sense conceptually, and loadings were fairly well distributed, but three of the variable items had small loadings and were subsequently dropped (these included family magazines, news magazines and non-local daily newspapers.)

The remaining 18 items were re-analyzed, and five factors were extracted. The scree plot is somewhat ambiguous, but all loadings on the five factors were distributed equally, and the factors made sense conceptually. Media factors were named: **Newspaper News** (community news, local news and world news); **Science Information** (science books, science magazines, environmental books and science TV); **Health Information** (health books, exercise books, medical books and women's magazines); **Newspaper Health** (health news, food news and environment news); and **TV News** (national news, local news and news documentaries.)

To test the reliability of the factors, summative scales were computed, and Cronbach's alpha scores obtained, which were judged sufficient. Weighted scales were computed for each factor.

[Table 2]

Interpersonal Discussion Variables. Respondents were also asked how frequently they discussed information about water, radon, foods, cleaners, AIDS, heart disease and smoking with neighbors, spouses or experts, a method found useful by Scherer (1988). Respondents answered on a four-part scale that ranged from "never" to "five or more times per month."

A factor analysis using Maximum Likelihood extraction was run on all 21 discussion variables, from which five factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 emerged, although the scree plot was ambiguous. Two of the five orthogonally rotated factors were not interpretable, and these loadings were quite low. A new analysis was run, this time restricting the extraction to three factors. The new factors made sense conceptually, and were cleanly divided between the neighbor, expert and spouse discussion items. A reliability test indicated that each factor "held together," and weighted factor scores were then computed for the three scales.

[Table 3]

Efficacy Variables. Respondents were asked a series of questions aimed at revealing their self-efficacy about the eight risks noted above. In keeping with the conceptualization proposed by Bandura (1977), efficacy questions were aimed at these specific risk types. Respondents were therefore asked to rate their expectations of controlling risks:

> To what extent do you have the power to solve the following health problem?
>
> - Contaminants in drinking water
> - Smoking
> - Radon
> - Chemical residues on food
> - AIDS
> - Low-level radioactive waste
> - High blood cholesterol
>
> Answer choices included:
>
> - This isn't a problem
> - I have solved
> - I can solve with help
> - Someone else must solve
> - Don't know

A high score reflected high self-efficacy, while a low score revealed low efficacy.

Researchers disagree on whether or not self-efficacy is generalizable from one situation to the next, or from one risk type to the next. Yet it is plausible that the ability to successfully cope with risk can be generalized to some situations, and several researchers assert that a generalized efficacy scale is methodologically sound (Sherer, Maddux, Mercandante, Prentice-Dunn, Jacobs & Rogers, 1982.)

Before creating a scale, a preliminary factor analysis of all efficacy variables was run, which resulted in an uninterpretable solution. Using Kaiser's Rule, three eigenvalues greater than 1 were found, but the scree plot was ambiguous. One factor had a single, high loading (AIDS), and the heart-disease item loaded equally low on all three factors. An oblique rotation had similar results. The heart item was subsequently dropped, and the factor analysis was rerun. Two factors emerged with eigenvalues greater than 1, accounting for 52 percent of the variance. Food, cleaners, AIDS and low-level radioactive risk loaded on one factor, while smoking, water and radon risk loaded on the other. Interpreting these two factors was perplexing, for the efficacy factors did not divide as cleanly as did the risk judgment factors. Recall that the eight variables aimed at Societal Risk judgment were split between Voluntary (smoking, heart and AIDS) and Involuntary (water, food, radon and cleaners) risks. Common sense might indicate that the efficacy scales should be divided similarly along voluntary and involuntary dimensions, but the efficacy factors seemed to defy reason. The self-efficacy factors were nevertheless labeled as **Personal** (smoking, water and radon) and **Social** (food, cleaners, AIDS and low-level radioactive waste.) While this solution was not entirely satisfactory, it was important to distinguish between the efficacy scales and the voluntary and involuntary risk judgment scales. Reliability tests were run on each factor, and weighted scales were computed.

[Table 4]

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Correlations. As expected, a high sense of vulnerability to risks were correlated at significance with the demographic variables. Lower education and income was associated with higher risk perception, as was being a woman.

In support of the health communication literature, a sense of high self-efficacy was negatively correlated with high risk judgment, indicating that individuals who believe they can control risks are less likely to feel threatened by risks.

Communication was also associated with high risk perception. Talking to one's spouse, neighbors and experts was positively related to risk judgment. As for mass media use, four of the five factors were associated with risk judgment. The Health Information scale, Science Information scale, TV News scale, and Newspaper Health scale were positively associated with risk judgment. The Newspaper News scale was not correlated at significance with risk judgment.

The dependent variables were intercorrelated, and it is worth noting that Personal Risk judgment and Involuntary Risk were highly correlated.

[Tables 5 & 6]

Risk Judgment Comparison. Respondents did judge other people as more vulnerable than themselves to all eight risks, and the difference in mean scores across each risk type (AIDS, radon, etc.) was statistically significant (p<.000). This finding supports Hypothesis 1, that people judge others to be at greater risk than they believe they are personally. Note that the greatest difference between personal versus societal risk judgments was with AIDS: respondents rated AIDS as the greatest threat to society, but the disease posed the smallest personal threat among the eight risk types.

[Table 7]

Regressions. To get a clearer picture of how efficacy and communications influence risk judgment, regressions were run with the three dependent judgment variables: Personal risk, Involuntary risk and Voluntary risk. Five blocks were entered in the following hierarchical order for the predictor variables:

- Demographic variables
- Self-efficacy scales
- Interpersonal discussion scales
- Media scales
- Risk judgment scales

The findings fortify much of the recent literature on the multidimensional aspects of risk judgments. The way people think about risks is complex, defying simplistic explanation. In addition, factors which appear to contribute to one's personal sense of risk are not necessarily the same factors which are associated with one's perception about how others, or "society", judge risks, in support of the impersonal impact and optimistic bias theories. And while the current study is far from exhaustive -- certainly there is a multitude of variables neglected in the analysis which may add explanatory power to risk judgment -- mass media use, interpersonal discussion and self-efficacy do contribute significantly (albeit modestly) to risk judgment.

[Figure 1]

Demographics. With the exception of the other risk judgment variables, demographic variables provided the greatest (weighted) predictive power for risk judgment. Specifically, education and age were negatively associated with Personal Risk judgment, although education was positively related to Voluntary Risk. The contribution of income was not statistically significant for any of the dependent variables, although it did approach significance for Voluntary Risk (weighted beta= -.07, t-value= -1.63 at .10 significance.)

[Tables 8 & 9]

We would expect that low socioeconomic status would contribute to feelings of high risk, and some researchers have speculated that individuals who lack the means to cope with health or technological risks feel particularly at risk (Litt, 1988; Pilisuk & Acredolo, 1987; Lefcourt, 1982).

Women typically earn less than men, and in this survey, household income was higher for the male respondents.[1] In the surveyed population, more women than men were divorced, widowed or single than were men, although educational levels for the sexes were comparable. Still, being a woman was associated with higher risk judgment on the Voluntary and Involuntary risk dimensions. This finding supports others (Pilisuk & Acredolo; Worell, 1988; Funch, 1987) who have reported higher risk perception and lower self-efficacy among women.

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[1] While the household income in the middle range ($20,000 to $39,999 annually) was roughly the same for male and female respondents (28 and 30 percent), men reported higher household income in the $40,000-and-over bracket (54 percent) contrasted with women (41 percent). Similarly, more women than men reported household income in the lower brackets (under $19,999): 18 percent of men and 28 percent of women.

What might account for the higher perception among women in the **societal-level** risk categories? Women tend to shoulder the responsibility for nurturing -- caring for others -- which may contribute to a greater perception of societal risk. But it is surprising that being a woman is **not** associated with personal-level risk. In fact, it is **men** who are more inclined toward high risk perception on the Personal Risk Judgment dimension (weighted beta= -.07, t-value= -1.95, .05 significance.) This is rather surprising. Perhaps women are more concerned about risks to others, while the men in our survey may believe they are more at risk personally. One study refuted the notion that women are more concerned about their health than men, as is sometimes thought (Marshall & Funch, 1986.) Women were no more likely to seek care (for cancer symptoms) than men, and once diagnosed, women took a significantly longer time to obtain cancer treatment.

Self-Efficacy. When demographic variables are controlled statistically, other variables contribute to high risk perception. Self-efficacy, which is arguably associated with socioeconomic status (Coleman & Scherer, 1990; Lefcourt, 1982) tends to be negatively related with risk perception, as common sense might dictate. In other words, it makes sense that people who feel they cannot control risks would also have a greater sense of being at risk.

The two dimensions on efficacy -- a "personal" dimension (smoking, water, radon) and a "social" dimension (food, cleaners, AIDS, low-level radioactive waste) -- were both predictive of risk judgment. Personal Efficacy was negatively associated with Personal Risk judgment, which suggests that respondents who lack a sense of control over certain types of risks also sense a greater likelihood of coming to personal harm. In addition, the Social Efficacy scale was negatively related to Involuntary Risk judgment. This finding supports Hypothesis 2, that high efficacy will be associated with low risk judgment.

However, contrary to Hypothesis 2, personal efficacy was **positively** associated with Involuntary Risk judgment (water, radon, cleaners and food). How can this discrepancy be explained?

First, it does seem reasonable that lacking control over certain types of risks would be associated with a greater sense of being at risk for external threats such as radon, water, food or cleaners. But the positive relationship with high risk judgment on involuntary risks and high efficacy for personal threats presents a rather exasperating dilemma.

One explanation might be that individuals who have a strong sense of control over "personal" types of risk are less likely to deem themselves as being at risk.

Communication Channels. Once demographic and efficacy variables are accounted for statistically, interpersonal and mass communication channels contribute to risk judgment.

We would expect to find a relationship with interpersonal communication and high risk perception, and the regressions bear this out. For Personal Risk judgment, talking to neighbors, while not statistically significant, shows a positive relationship (weighted beta= .05, t-value= 1.32, significance= .19). This finding supports Hypothesis 3 in principle only.

Talking to spouse and neighbor is predictive of Involuntary Risk. (Talking to experts, while not significant, shows a negative relationship.) Such results are contrary to Hypothesis 4, which proposed that interpersonal discussion would not be linearly related to social risk judgments. Obviously, further research is needed to fully explicate the relationship between interpersonal discussion and the social and personal dimensions of risk judgment, but it does appear that talking to others carries some influence on both risk judgment domains. This is particularly interesting in light that risk literature suggests that individuals distinguish between risks to others and risks to themselves.

As for mass media, the TV News scale and Science Information scale offered predictive power for risk judgment. Seeking out science information (science books, science magazines, environmental books and science TV) predicted Involuntary Risk judgment, and the Newspaper News scale (community news, local news and world news) edged toward significance (weighted beta=.06, t-value=1.6, significance=.12) for the Voluntary Risk judgment regression. These findings support Hypothesis 5, that high use of mass-mediated information will be positively associated with societal-risk judgments.

But contrary to expectation, mass media **also** predicted personal-level risk judgment. Viewing television news (local and national news, and news documentaries) predicted Personal Risk judgment, contradicting Hypothesis 6, (that no association would be found for high mass mediated information use and personal-level risk.) Clearly the relationship between television news-viewing and personal risk perception needs to be explored further.

CONCLUSIONS

Risk perception is quite complex, and correlations do not tell the whole story. On one level, women are more likely to believe others are vulnerable to risks, while men seem more likely to view themselves as personally vulnerable to certain types of risks. But on another level -- when gender is controlled -- it appears that reading science information predicts high risk perception on a societal dimension. Less clear, however, is why increased viewing of television news predicts risk judgment on a personal dimension.

Controlling for variables by way of multiple regression analysis allows us to brush aside some of the flotsam that blocks the view. And while we might formulate tentative descriptions of relationships between variables, we are still left pondering the issue of causality and direction of effects. We resist the temptation of assigning direction based on the regressions: reading or viewing health and risk information may cause high risk judgment, but isn't it equally conceivable that high risk judgment causes individuals to seek information? Exposure to mass media and interpersonal discussion are not the sole determinants of risk judgments; contextual influences as well as intrapersonal factors should be factored into the model. While experimental research leaves the impression that messages convey meanings which result in risk judgments, experiments lack the richness of context. Context, of course, can take on many meanings, including the social fabric of the individual's or group's frame of reference. For example, Juanillo and Scherer (1991) found the family context a highly useful framework for their recent health study.

Researchers should continue to study risk along these multiple levels of analysis, with the aim of better understanding the factors which shape risk perceptions. Care should be taken, however, in generalizing the results of the current study.

Our investigation differs in several ways from previous risk judgment studies, and the results may not be comparable. The Pilisuk & Acredolo study operationalized risk perception on an affective dimension, as "concern," which is conceptually different from our cognitive operationalization of risk as "likelihood of coming to harm." Pilisuk & Acredolo's risk variables included water, food, chemicals, storage of chemicals, nuclear accidents and war, air pollution, car accidents and transportation of explosives, while we looked at water, foods, cleaners, radon, low-level radioactive waste, heart disease, AIDS and smoking. Pilisuk & Acredolo found one dimension on risk, while we operationalized risk on a societal and personal dimension, and found two underlying factors for social-level risks.

The current study also differs from others in its treatment of communication variables. For example, the five media factors are conceptually linked in an information-seeking context. As a result, media scales are clustered according to type of information sought, rather than creating summative scales using media genre (news versus health information) or media channel (newspaper versus television).

How do our findings stack up to previous research? Generally speaking, the study supports the multidimensional quality of risk perception and its complex relationship to channel use. Both mass mediated and interpersonal channels are linked to cognitive risk perception, but not necessarily in ways we might assume. For example, some mass mediated channels predicted high risk on the societal domain, a finding supported by the literature (Culbertson & Stempel, 1985; Tyler & Cook, 1984.) But mass media also predicted personal-level risk, contrary to what the literature suggests. Interpersonal channels were predictive of societal-level risk perception, and very nearly predictive of personal-level risk perception. But is one channel more influential than the other? Our study suggests that mass media and interpersonal discussion are equally predictive of risk judgment, based on the amount of variance explained by each "block" in the three regression equations.

As Chaffee had observed, it may prove rather fruitless to view channels in a competitive light: it may be more prudent to examine what motivates the information-seeking behavior among an array of channels in the first place.

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TABLE 1

Factor Loadings on Cognitive Risk Judgment

PERSONAL RISK JUDGMENT

	Personal
FOOD	.73813
RAD WASTE	.72349
RADON	.69310
WATER	.68045
CLEANERS	.65646
AIDS	.60254
SMOKING	.56519
HEART	.44504

SOCIETAL RISK JUDGMENT

	Involuntary	**Voluntary**
FOOD	**.81616**	.23920
CLEANERS	**.71132**	.25289
WATER	**.61163**	.23797
RADON	**.54346**	.42166
HEART	.21561	**.63927**
AIDS	.19406	**.60314**
SMOKING	.27523	.60056

Maximim likelihood extraction & varimax rotation
N=671

TABLE 2

Factor Loadings on Media Content

	Newspaper News	Science Information	Health Information	Health News	TV News
Community news	**.82975**	-.01324	.01169	.23847	.11866
Local paper	**.79263**	.00626	.03108	.07302	.07006
World news	**.69887**	.14329	-.00923	.34453	.14995
Science book	.02933	**.70886**	-.00770	-.00271	-.06566
Science mag.	.08969	**.64106**	.06432	.05283	.16641
Envir. book	.07554	**.62661**	.25944	-.00250	-.00925
Science TV	-.03596	**.57355**	-.01818	.13524	.32428
Health book	.01824	.20313	**.83842**	.09964	.03644
Exercise book	-.01089	.10396	**.67411**	.01936	.06081
Medicine book	-.04013	.32860	**.45626**	.17492	.01042
Women's mag.	.05240	-.12980	**.45151**	.10701	.07489
Health paper	.36188	.04833	.20832	**.80844**	.16639
Food paper	.29460	.00682	.31960	**.71201**	.16218
Envir. paper	.49848	.29111	.01340	**.54857**	.05864
TV nat'l news	.08819	.04124	.08284	.06824	**.78397**
TV local news	.14801	.00444	.08393	.06901	**.68899**
TV news docs	.04395	.15731	.02538	.08858	**.59209**

[Maximum Likelihood Extraction, varimax rotation
N=671]

TABLE 3

Factor Loadings on Interpersonal Discussion

	Spouse	**Neighbor**	**Expert**
Spouse			
Food	**.79347**	.16500	.03822
Cleaners	**.72188**	.16349	.08427
Heart	**.68066**	.05571	.12333
Water	**.64447**	.09377	.17862
AIDS	**.64291**	-.00019	.10670
Smoking	**.63497**	.03704	.10206
Radon	**.47804**	.15863	.04433
Neighbor			
Food	.10334	**.75472**	.16311
Cleaners	.12539	**.71687**	.06102
Heart	.10793	**.69475**	.19982
Smoking	.06224	**.67080**	.16797
AIDS	-.01113	**.58463**	.17285
Water	.18695	**.54403**	.16060
Radon	.12259	**.52135**	.15050
Expert			
Smoking	.04202	.14607	**.75357**
Heart	.12942	.14806	**.72520**
Food	.10537	.29763	**.70474**
AIDS	.09993	.12140	**.65529**
Cleaners	.03623	.16604	**.58418**
Water	.21215	.08419	**.48817**
Radon	.08776	.12987	**.47637**

[Maximum Likelihood extraction, varimax rotation
N=671]

TABLE 4

Factor Loadings on Self-efficacy

	Social	Personal
Self-efficacy		
Food	**.63618**	.21134
LLRW	**.59770**	.22920
Cleaners	**.59364**	.19841
AIDS	**.37026**	.08075
Radon	.13668	**.99011**
Water	.29327	**.41072**
Smoking	.11077	**.25983**

[Maximum Likelihood Extraction, varimax rotation, N=671]

TABLE 5

Correlations of Risk Judgment Scales with Demographics

	GENDER	EDUCATION	INCOME	AGE
RISK PERCEPTION				
Personal	.0900*	-.1545***	-.1394***	-.0199
Societal Involuntary *(water, radon, cleaners, foods)*	.1855***	-.0562	-.0916**	-.0172
Societal Voluntary *(smoking, AIDS, heart)*	.1651***	.1154*	-.0402	-.0756

Correlations of Risk Judgment Scales with Self-Efficacy Scales

	SOCIAL	PERSONAL
RISK PERCEPTION		
Personal	-.1107**	-.1719**
Societal Involuntary *(water, radon, cleaners, foods)*	-.1762***	-.0333
Societal Voluntary *(smoking, AIDS, heart)*	-.0301	-.0457

* $p \leq .05$
** $p \leq .01$
*** $p \leq .001$

Note:
- Gender codes as dummy variable, female=1, male=0
- Personal Risk includes: heart, AIDS, smoking, LLRW, water, radon, cleaners, foods
- Involuntary Risk includes: LLRW, radon, water, cleaners
- Voluntary Risk includes: heart, AIDS, smoking
- Social Efficacy includes: food, LLRW, AIDS, cleaners
- Personal Efficacy includes: radon, water, smoking

TABLE 6

Correlations of Risk Judgments Scales with Interpersonal Discussion

	TALK NEIGHBOR	**TALK SPOUSE**	**TALK EXPERT**
RISK PERCEPTION			
Personal	.2112***	.1273**	.1137**
Societal Involuntary *(water, radon, cleaners, foods)*	.2436***	.1761***	.1163**
Societal Voluntary *(smoking, AIDS, heart)*	.0696	.0350	.0456

Correlations of Risk Judgment Scales with Mass Media Use Scales

	NEWSPAPER NEWS	**SCIENCE INFO**	**HEALTH INFO**	**NEWSPAPER NEWS**	**TV NEWS**
RISK PERCEPTION					
Personal	-.0631	.0497	.1018**	.0551	.1340**
Involuntary Societal *(water, radon, cleaners, foods)*	-.0733	.0926**	.1361***	.1059**	.1044**
Voluntary Societal *(smoking, AIDS, heart)*	.0200	-.0098	.0771	.0440	.0045

* $p \leq .05$
** $p \leq .01$
*** $p \leq .001$

Note:

- Personal Risk includes: heart, AIDS, smoking, LLRW, water, radon, cleaners, foods
- Involuntary Risk includes: LLRW, radon, water, cleaners
- Voluntary Risk includes: heart, AIDS, smoking

TABLE 7

Mean Comparison of Risk Judgments by Category
Across Personal and Societal Dimensions

RISK TYPE	MEAN	STD DEV	PAIRED T-VALUE
AIDS (personal)	2.26	1.36	
AIDS (societal)	5.19	1.15	45.85***
LLRW (personal)	3.05	1.26	
LLRW (societal)	4.51	1.09	27.93***
Water (personal)	3.59	1.22	
Water (societal)	4.67	1.09	23.01***
Heart (personal)	3.87	1.27	
Heart (societal)	4.94	1.11	19.43***
Radon (personal)	2.91	1.05	
Radon (societal)	3.77	1.18	18.23***
Smoking (personal)	3.61	1.76	
Smoking (societal)	4.79	1.31	15.22***
Cleaners (personal)	3.22	1.20	
Cleaners (societal)	3.82	1.26	14.26***
Food (personal)	3.83	1.27	
Food (societal)	4.29	1.11	12.53***

*** $p \leq .000$, two-tailed T-test

N=671

TABLE 8

Prediction of Personal Risk Judgment
Hierarchical Regression

Independent Variables	Weighted Beta	Cumulative R-Square
Demographics		
Education	-.13***	
Gender	-.07*	
Age	-.10**	
Income	-.04	.04
Self-efficacy Scales		
Social	.00	
Personal	-.14***	.07
Channel Scales		
Talk neighbor	.05	
Talk spouse	.00	
Talk expert	.01	.11
Newspaper (news)	.00	
Science	.02	
TV news	.09**	
Health Info	.02	
Newspaper (health)	.02	.14
Risk Perception Scales		
Voluntary	.12***	
Involuntary	.52***	.41 (total)

* $p \leq .05$
** $p \leq .01$
*** $p \leq .001$

TABLE 9

Prediction of Societal Risk Judgment
Hierarchical Regressions

INVOLUNTARY RISK

Independent Variables	**Weighted Beta**	**Cumulative R-Square**
Demographics		
Education	.01	
Gender	.13***	
Age	.00	
Income	-.03	.04
Self-efficacy Scales		
Social	-.11***	
Personal	.07*	.07
Channel Scales		
Talk neighbor	.08*	
Talk spouse	.09**	
Talk expert	-.05	.13
Newspaper (news)	-.04	
Science	.07*	
TV news	.00	
Health	.00	
Newspaper (health)	.04	.15
Risk Perception Scales		
Social (involuntary)	.07*	
Personal	.52***	**.41 (total)**
	VOLUNTARY RISK	
Demographics		
Education	.19***	
Gender	.13**	
Age	-.03	
Income	-.07	.05
Self-efficacy Scales		
Social	.02	
Personal	-.01	.05
Channel Scales		
Talk neighbor	.01	
Talk spouse	.00	
Talk expert	.00	.06
Newspaper (news)	.06	
Science	-.04	
TV news	.00	
Health	-.01	
Newspaper (health)	-.01	.06
Risk Perception Scales		
Personal	.18***	
Involuntary	.11*	**.15 (total)**

* $p \leq .05$
** $p \leq .01$
*** $p \leq .001$

FIGURE 1

Risk Judgment Regressed on Demographics, Efficacy
and Communication Channels
(Weighted Betas)

	Dependent Variables		
Independent Variables	**PERSONAL RISK**	**INVOLUNTARY RISK**	**VOLUNTARY RISK**
DEMOGRAPHICS	Education (-.13) Age (-.10) Male (-.07)	Female (.13)	Education (.19) Female (.13)
EFFICACY	Personal Efficacy(-.14)	Personal Efficacy (.07) Societal Efficacy (-.11)	
DISCUSSION		Spouse (.09) Neighbor (.08)	
MASS MEDIA	TV (.09)	Science (.07)	
DEPENDENT VARIABLES	Involuntary Risk (.52) Voluntary Risk(.12)	Personal Risk(.52) Voluntary Risk (.07)	Personal Risk (.18) Involuntary Risk(.11)

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APPENDIX

YOUR HEALTH, HOME, AND FAMILY

A Study by and for New York State Residents

The purpose of this study is to give New York residents an opportunity to voice their opinions about a number of health, family, and community issues.

Conducted by the Department of Communication, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853.

1) We all value good health, but knowing what problems might threaten us in the future is sometimes difficult to anticipate. How likely do you think it is that ***your health*** will be affected by the following problems sometime in the future?

How likely do you think it is that these will cause you health problems?
(Please circle your responses.)

a. **Chemical contaminants in your drinking water**	HAS ALREADY CAUSED PROBLEMS	VERY LIKELY	SOMEWHAT LIKELY	NOT SURE	NOT VERY LIKELY	NOT AT ALL LIKELY
b. **Smoking**	HAS ALREADY CAUSED PROBLEMS	VERY LIKELY	SOMEWHAT LIKELY	NOT SURE	NOT VERY LIKELY	NOT AT ALL LIKELY
c. **Radon in your home**	HAS ALREADY CAUSED PROBLEMS	VERY LIKELY	SOMEWHAT LIKELY	NOT SURE	NOT VERY LIKELY	NOT AT ALL LIKELY
d. **Chemical residues in or on foods you buy**	HAS ALREADY CAUSED PROBLEMS	VERY LIKELY	SOMEWHAT LIKELY	NOT SURE	NOT VERY LIKELY	NOT AT ALL LIKELY
e. **Household chemicals (such as cleaners, paints etc.)**	HAS ALREADY CAUSED PROBLEMS	VERY LIKELY	SOMEWHAT LIKELY	NOT SURE	NOT VERY LIKELY	NOT AT ALL LIKELY
f. **AIDS**	HAS ALREADY CAUSED PROBLEMS	VERY LIKELY	SOMEWHAT LIKELY	NOT SURE	NOT VERY LIKELY	NOT AT ALL LIKELY
g. **Low level radioactive waste**	HAS ALREADY CAUSED PROBLEMS	VERY LIKELY	SOMEWHAT LIKELY	NOT SURE	NOT VERY LIKELY	NOT AT ALL LIKELY
h. **Heart disease**	HAS ALREADY CAUSED PROBLEMS	VERY LIKELY	SOMEWHAT LIKELY	NOT SURE	NOT VERY LIKELY	NOT AT ALL LIKELY

2) How likely do you think it is that the following will be very serious problems for ***our country*** in the future?

How likely do you think this will be a serious problem?
(Please circle your responses.)

a. **Chemical contaminants in drinking water**	IS ALREADY SERIOUS	VERY LIKELY	SOMEWHAT LIKELY	NOT SURE	NOT VERY LIKELY	NOT AT ALL LIKELY
b. **Smoking**	IS ALREADY SERIOUS	VERY LIKELY	SOMEWHAT LIKELY	NOT SURE	NOT VERY LIKELY	NOT AT ALL LIKELY
c. **Radon in homes**	IS ALREADY SERIOUS	VERY LIKELY	SOMEWHAT LIKELY	NOT SURE	NOT VERY LIKELY	NOT AT ALL LIKELY
d. **Chemical residues in or on foods**	IS ALREADY SERIOUS	VERY LIKELY	SOMEWHAT LIKELY	NOT SURE	NOT VERY LIKELY	NOT AT ALL LIKELY
e. **Household chemicals (such as cleaners, paints etc.)**	IS ALREADY SERIOUS	VERY LIKELY	SOMEWHAT LIKELY	NOT SURE	NOT VERY LIKELY	NOT AT ALL LIKELY
f. **AIDS**	IS ALREADY SERIOUS	VERY LIKELY	SOMEWHAT LIKELY	NOT SURE	NOT VERY LIKELY	NOT AT ALL LIKELY
g. **Low level radioactive waste**	IS ALREADY SERIOUS	VERY LIKELY	SOMEWHAT LIKELY	NOT SURE	NOT VERY LIKELY	NOT AT ALL LIKELY
h. **Heart disease**	IS ALREADY SERIOUS	VERY LIKELY	SOMEWHAT LIKELY	NOT SURE	NOT VERY LIKELY	NOT AT ALL LIKELY

3) Which of the following statements best describes you? (Please circle one letter.)

a. **I don't see any need to exercise.**

b. **I'm too busy to take time to exercise.**

c. **I get enough exercise on my job.**

d. **I try to exercise once in a while.**

e. **I try to exercise at least twice a week for at least 20 minutes.**
(include walking, jogging, swimming and other active sports)

4) About how many times in *an average* week do you eat the following foods?

	Number of times in an average week that you eat the following? (Please circle your responses.)				
a. **Hamburgers, cheeseburgers or meatloaf**	NEVER	LESS THAN ONCE EACH WEEK	ONCE OR TWICE EACH WEEK	THREE OR FOUR TIMES EACH WEEK	FIVE OR MORE TIMES EACH WEEK
b. **Ham, hotdogs and lunch meats**	NEVER	LESS THAN ONCE EACH WEEK	ONCE OR TWICE EACH WEEK	THREE OR FOUR TIMES EACH WEEK	FIVE OR MORE TIMES EACH WEEK
c. **Whole milk**	NEVER	LESS THAN ONCE EACH WEEK	ONCE OR TWICE EACH WEEK	THREE OR FOUR TIMES EACH WEEK	FIVE OR MORE TIMES EACH WEEK
d. **Donuts, cookies and cakes**	NEVER	LESS THAN ONCE EACH WEEK	ONCE OR TWICE EACH WEEK	THREE OR FOUR TIMES EACH WEEK	FIVE OR MORE TIMES EACH WEEK
e. **Beef steaks and roast**	NEVER	LESS THAN ONCE EACH WEEK	ONCE OR TWICE EACH WEEK	THREE OR FOUR TIMES EACH WEEK	FIVE OR MORE TIMES EACH WEEK
f. **White bread, rolls and crackers**	NEVER	LESS THAN ONCE EACH WEEK	ONCE OR TWICE EACH WEEK	THREE OR FOUR TIMES EACH WEEK	FIVE OR MORE TIMES EACH WEEK
g. **Eggs**	NEVER	LESS THAN ONCE EACH WEEK	ONCE OR TWICE EACH WEEK	THREE OR FOUR TIMES EACH WEEK	FIVE OR MORE TIMES EACH WEEK
h. **Cheese (don't include cottage cheese)**	NEVER	LESS THAN ONCE EACH WEEK	ONCE OR TWICE EACH WEEK	THREE OR FOUR TIMES EACH WEEK	FIVE OR MORE TIMES EACH WEEK
i. **Margarine and butter**	NEVER	LESS THAN ONCE EACH WEEK	ONCE OR TWICE EACH WEEK	THREE OR FOUR TIMES EACH WEEK	FIVE OR MORE TIMES EACH WEEK
j. **Salad dressing and mayonnaise**	NEVER	LESS THAN ONCE EACH WEEK	ONCE OR TWICE EACH WEEK	THREE OR FOUR TIMES EACH WEEK	FIVE OR MORE TIMES EACH WEEK
k. **Pork chops and roast**	NEVER	LESS THAN ONCE EACH WEEK	ONCE OR TWICE EACH WEEK	THREE OR FOUR TIMES EACH WEEK	FIVE OR MORE TIMES EACH WEEK
l. **French fries and fried potatoes**	NEVER	LESS THAN ONCE EACH WEEK	ONCE OR TWICE EACH WEEK	THREE OR FOUR TIMES EACH WEEK	FIVE OR MORE TIMES EACH WEEK

5) Please indicate the extent you have done or plan to do any of the following.
(Please circle your responses.)

a. Installed water filter	I HAVE DONE THIS	I PLAN TO DO THIS	I MAY CONSIDER DOING THIS	I SEE NO NEED TO DO THIS

If you have, what type?

a. Charcoal filter	d. Sediment
b. Distillation	e. Other (specify) ____________________
c. Reverse osmosis	

b. Tested your home for indoor radon	I HAVE DONE THIS	I PLAN TO DO THIS	I MAY CONSIDER DOING THIS	I SEE NO NEED TO DO THIS

What year did you test? 19___

What was the test result? ____________________

c. Had your blood cholesterol level tested?..........................	I HAVE DONE THIS	I PLAN TO DO THIS	I MAY CONSIDER DOING THIS	I SEE NO NEED TO DO THIS

What year did you test? 19___

What was the test result?
- a. It's OK
- b. Potential problem
- c. Definite problem

d. Tested my water for chemical contaminants .... *(do not include bacteria tests)*	I HAVE DONE THIS	I PLAN TO DO THIS	I MAY CONSIDER DOING THIS	I SEE NO NEED TO DO THIS

What year did you test? 19___

What was the test result?
- a. Contaminated
- b. Not contaminated

6) Who do you know who now has or has had ***chemical contaminants*** in their drinking water?
(Please circle all which apply.)

a. Neighbors	c. Acquaintances
b. Friends and or relatives	d. No one I know personally

7) Where do you get your drinking water? **(Please circle all which apply.)**

a. Town/city	c. Bottled
b. Well	d. Other (specify) ____________________

8) To what extent do you smoke? (Please circle one letter.)

a. Never have
b. I did but I've quit

c. Light smoker (0-10 per day)
d. Moderate smoker (11-25 per day)
e. Heavy smoker (more than 25 per day)

9) How closely do the following statements describe you?

To what extent do these describe you?
(Please circle your responses.)

a. When I make plans I am certain I can make them work	SOUNDS VERY MUCH LIKE ME	SOMEWHAT LIKE ME	NOT SURE	NOT VERY MUCH LIKE ME	NOT AT ALL LIKE ME
b. If I can't do a job the first time I keep trying until I can	SOUNDS VERY MUCH LIKE ME	SOMEWHAT LIKE ME	NOT SURE	NOT VERY MUCH LIKE ME	NOT AT ALL LIKE ME
c. When unexpected problems occur, I don't handle them well	SOUNDS VERY MUCH LIKE ME	SOMEWHAT LIKE ME	NOT SURE	NOT VERY MUCH LIKE ME	NOT AT ALL LIKE ME
d. I avoid trying to learn new things when they look difficult	SOUNDS VERY MUCH LIKE ME	SOMEWHAT LIKE ME	NOT SURE	NOT VERY MUCH LIKE ME	NOT AT ALL LIKE ME

10) Sometimes we are fortunate enough to be able to solve our own problems. Other times we can only solve a particular problem with help or we find that a particular problem just can't be solved. If you believe that the following are problems, to what extent do you have the power to solve them for you and your family?

To what extent can you solve, or have you solved these problems?
(Please circle your responses.)

a. Chemical contaminants in your drinking water	THIS ISN'T A PROBLEM FOR ME	I CAN (HAVE) SOLVE(D)	I CAN (HAVE) SOLVE(D) WITH HELP	SOMEONE ELSE MUST SOLVE	DON'T KNOW
b. Smoking	THIS ISN'T A PROBLEM FOR ME	I CAN (HAVE) SOLVE(D)	I CAN (HAVE) SOLVE(D) WITH HELP	SOMEONE ELSE MUST SOLVE	DON'T KNOW
c. Radon in your home	THIS ISN'T A PROBLEM FOR ME	I CAN (HAVE) SOLVE(D)	I CAN (HAVE) SOLVE(D) WITH HELP	SOMEONE ELSE MUST SOLVE	DON'T KNOW
d. Chemical residues in or on foods you buy	THIS ISN'T A PROBLEM FOR ME	I CAN (HAVE) SOLVE(D)	I CAN (HAVE) SOLVE(D) WITH HELP	SOMEONE ELSE MUST SOLVE	DON'T KNOW
e. Household chemicals (such as cleaners, paints, etc.)	THIS ISN'T A PROBLEM FOR ME	I CAN (HAVE) SOLVE(D)	I CAN (HAVE) SOLVE(D) WITH HELP	SOMEONE ELSE MUST SOLVE	DON'T KNOW
f. Risk of AIDS	THIS ISN'T A PROBLEM FOR ME	I CAN (HAVE) SOLVE(D)	I CAN (HAVE) SOLVE(D) WITH HELP	SOMEONE ELSE MUST SOLVE	DON'T KNOW
g. Low level radioactive waste	THIS ISN'T A PROBLEM FOR ME	I CAN (HAVE) SOLVE(D)	I CAN (HAVE) SOLVE(D) WITH HELP	SOMEONE ELSE MUST SOLVE	DON'T KNOW
h. High blood cholesterol	THIS ISN'T A PROBLEM FOR ME	I CAN (HAVE) SOLVE(D)	I CAN (HAVE) SOLVE(D) WITH HELP	SOMEONE ELSE MUST SOLVE	DON'T KNOW

11) There are many areas of science in which knowledgeable individuals disagree with each other. Some people agree and others disagree with the following statements. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

	To what extent do you agree or disagree? (Please circle your responses.)				
a. You can tell when water is contaminated by its taste, smell or color	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
b. Chlorination of drinking water can result in formation of chemicals which cause cancer	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
c. You can consume trace amounts of hazardous chemicals in foods without harmful health effects	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
d. Foods would be safer if we did away with all man-made chemicals and pesticides used in foods	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
e. The risk from accidental exposure to chemicals spilled in highway accidents is greater than risk from household chemical use (drain openers, cleaning materials, paints, thinners etc.)	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
f. Household cleaners such as drain and spray cleaners can be dangerous to one's health	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
g. You can almost always detect the presence of radon in your home by the odor	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
h. Radon gas occurs only in areas where there is radioactive waste from manufacturing	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
i. It is more important to watch for cholesterol in the diet than total fat when one is concerned about heart disease	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
j. Complex carbohydrates are healthy for your heart because these foods are low in fat and high in fiber	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
k. It is more healthy for your heart to eat foods high in polyunsaturated fat than foods high in saturated fat	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE

12) Have you or others you know experienced any of the following health problems?

	Who do you know who has or had... (Please circle all that apply.)				
a. **Heart Disease**	I HAVE	MOTHER OR FATHER	FRIENDS/ RELATIVES	ACQUAINTANCES	NO ONE I KNOW
b. **Lung cancer and did smoke**	I HAVE	FAMILY MEMBER	FRIENDS/ RELATIVES	ACQUAINTANCES	NO ONE I KNOW
c. **Lung cancer but *didn't* smoke**	I HAVE	FAMILY MEMBER	FRIENDS/ RELATIVES	ACQUAINTANCES	NO ONE I KNOW
d. **Health problems that may have been caused by chemical or pesticide residues in or on foods**	I HAVE	FAMILY MEMBER	FRIENDS/ RELATIVES	ACQUAINTANCES	NO ONE I KNOW
e. **Health problems that may have been caused by household chemicals (cleaners, paints etc.)**	I HAVE	FAMILY MEMBER	FRIENDS/ RELATIVES	ACQUAINTANCES	NO ONE I KNOW
f. **AIDS**	I HAVE	FAMILY MEMBER	FRIENDS/ RELATIVES	ACQUAINTANCES	NO ONE I KNOW

13) About how much time *each month* are you involved in activities of the following groups?

	How many times each month do you spend with.... (Please circle your responses.)			
a. Neighborhood groups	NONE	LESS THAN ONE HOUR/MONTH	1-5 HOURS/MONTH	MORE THAN 5 HOURS/MONTH
b. Service, professional or youth oriented groups	NONE	LESS THAN ONE HOUR/MONTH	1-5 HOURS/MONTH	MORE THAN 5 HOURS/MONTH
c. Religious organizations	NONE	LESS THAN ONE HOUR/MONTH	1-5 HOURS/MONTH	MORE THAN 5 HOURS/MONTH
d. Other organized groups such as recreational/social groups	NONE	LESS THAN ONE HOUR/MONTH	1-5 HOURS/MONTH	MORE THAN 5 HOURS/MONTH

14) About how many local and long distance calls have you made to the following in the past month? Please write in the blanks provided. *(If you are unsure of the number of calls to each, please guess.)*

How many calls did you make to...?

	Neighbors	Friends	Relatives	Experts	Others	Toll Free (800 numbers)
LOCAL CALLS	______	______	______	______	______	▨
LONG DISTANCE	▨	______	______	______	______	______

	(Please circle your responses.)			
15) How frequently do you read a daily newspaper *from your local community?*	ALMOST NEVER	ONCE OR TWICE EACH WEEK	THREE OR FOUR TIMES EACH WK	FIVE OR MORE TIMES EACH WK
16) How often do you read a daily newspaper which is ***NOT from your community?***	ALMOST NEVER	ONCE OR TWICE EACH WEEK	THREE OR FOUR TIMES EACH WK	FIVE OR MORE TIMES EACH WK

Which Non-local newspaper?

____

____

17) How often do you read articles in your newspaper about the following?

	Articles read in newspaper. (Please circle your responses.)			
a. Community news	ALMOST NEVER	ONCE OR TWICE EACH WEEK	THREE OR FOUR TIMES EACH WK	FIVE OR MORE TIMES EACH WK
b. National/world news	ALMOST NEVER	ONCE OR TWICE EACH WEEK	THREE OR FOUR TIMES EACH WK	FIVE OR MORE TIMES EACH WK
c. Environment	ALMOST NEVER	ONCE OR TWICE EACH WEEK	THREE OR FOUR TIMES EACH WK	FIVE OR MORE TIMES EACH WK
d. Health/medical	ALMOST NEVER	ONCE OR TWICE EACH WEEK	THREE OR FOUR TIMES EACH WK	FIVE OR MORE TIMES EACH WK
e. Food and nutrition	ALMOST NEVER	ONCE OR TWICE EACH WEEK	THREE OR FOUR TIMES EACH WK	FIVE OR MORE TIMES EACH WK

18) How often do you watch the following kinds of daily or weekly television programs?

	How often do you watch? (Please circle your responses.)			
a. **National network news** *(Such as CBS News, NBC Nightly News, ABC World News Tonight, or CNN)*	ALMOST NEVER	ONCE OR TWICE EACH WEEK	THREE OR FOUR TIMES EACH WK	FIVE OR MORE TIMES EACH WK
b. **Local news**	ALMOST NEVER	ONCE OR TWICE EACH WEEK	THREE OR FOUR TIMES EACH WK	FIVE OR MORE TIMES EACH WK
c. **News documentaries** *(Such as 60 Minutes, Face the Nation, 20/20, Nightline)*	ALMOST NEVER	ONCE OR TWICE EACH MONTH	3 OR 4 TIMES EACH MONTH	5 OR MORE TIMES EACH MONTH
d. **Science programs** *(Such as NOVA, Nature, Newton's Apple, or Cosmos)*	ALMOST NEVER	ONCE OR TWICE EACH MONTH	3 OR 4 TIMES EACH MONTH	5 OR MORE TIMES EACH MONTH

19) In the list of magazines below, please indicate how frequently you read each type of magazine.

	How often do you read? (Please circle your responses.)			
a. **News Magazines** *(Such as Time, Newsweek, U.S. News and World Report)*	ALMOST NEVER	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	VERY OFTEN
b. **Health or Medical Magazines or Newsletters** *(Such as American Health, Harvard Health Newsletter)*	ALMOST NEVER	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	VERY OFTEN
c. **Parents and Family Magazines** *(Such as Parent's Magazine, Baby Talk, Readers' Digest)*	ALMOST NEVER	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	VERY OFTEN
d. **Women's Magazines** *(Such as Cosmopolitan, Good Housekeeping, Ms.)*	ALMOST NEVER	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	VERY OFTEN
e. **Science Magazines** *(Such as National Geographic, Natural History, or Science)*	ALMOST NEVER	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	VERY OFTEN

f. Other (Please list) ______________________________

____

20) How many of the following types of *books* have you read or used in the past year?

	How many have you read or used? (Please circle your responses.)				
a. **Exercise and diet books**	NONE	1 or 2	3 or 4	5 or 6	MORE THAN 6
b. **Health/nutrition books**	NONE	1 or 2	3 or 4	5 or 6	MORE THAN 6
c. **Science/technology books**	NONE	1 or 2	3 or 4	5 or 6	MORE THAN 6
d. **Medicine books**	NONE	1 or 2	3 or 4	5 or 6	MORE THAN 6
e. **Environment/nature books**	NONE	1 or 2	3 or 4	5 or 6	MORE THAN 6
f. **Other types of books**	NONE	1 or 2	3 or 4	5 or 6	MORE THAN 6

This next section focuses on you and your family.

21) What is your marital status? (Please circle the most appropriate letter.)

a. Single, never married
b. Separated / Divorced
c. Widowed

Skip to Question 26

d. Live with spouse / partner
→ How long have you lived together? ________ YEARS

22) How frequently do you eat the evening meal together as a family (with all members present)? (Please circle one letter.)

a. Almost never
b. Once or twice each week
c. 3 or 4 times each week
d. Almost every day

23) How frequently do you eat the evening meal *while watching TV*, regardless of whether you eat alone or with other family members? (Circle only one letter.)

a. Almost never
b. Once or twice each week
c. 3, 4 or 5 times each week
d. Almost every day

24) Of all the jobs around the house which need to be done each day or week, about what proportion do you do?

	What proportion of these jobs do you do? (Please circle your responses.)				
a. Small household repair jobs	I DO ALMOST ALL	I DO ABOUT 3/4	I DO ABOUT 1/2	I DO ABOUT 1/4	I DO ALMOST NONE
b. Auto maintenance/repair (either doing it yourself or seeing that it gets done)	I DO ALMOST ALL	I DO ABOUT 3/4	I DO ABOUT 1/2	I DO ABOUT 1/4	I DO ALMOST NONE
c. Taking out the trash	I DO ALMOST ALL	I DO ABOUT 3/4	I DO ABOUT 1/2	I DO ABOUT 1/4	I DO ALMOST NONE
d. Getting children ready for school, bed, or other activities	I DO ALMOST ALL	I DO ABOUT 3/4	I DO ABOUT 1/2	I DO ABOUT 1/4	I DO ALMOST NONE
e. Shopping for food	I DO ALMOST ALL	I DO ABOUT 3/4	I DO ABOUT 1/2	I DO ABOUT 1/4	I DO ALMOST NONE
f. Household cleaning	I DO ALMOST ALL	I DO ABOUT 3/4	I DO ABOUT 1/2	I DO ABOUT 1/4	I DO ALMOST NONE
g. Preparing meals and cleaning-up	I DO ALMOST ALL	I DO ABOUT 3/4	I DO ABOUT 1/2	I DO ABOUT 1/4	I DO ALMOST NONE
h. Planning the meals	I DO ALMOST ALL	I DO ABOUT 3/4	I DO ABOUT 1/2	I DO ABOUT 1/4	I DO ALMOST NONE

This next section asks about who you talk with about various health issues. Some people talk frequently about these issues, others never do.

25) Within the ***past month***, about how many times would you say you have talked with your spouse or partner about the following topics? **(Please include face-to-face and telephone conversations.)**

	Times discussed with spouse or partner this month? (Please circle your responses.)			
a. Chemical contaminants in drinking water	NEVER	1-2 TIMES	3-4 TIMES	5 OR MORE TIMES
b. Heart disease caused by diet and lack of exercise	NEVER	1-2 TIMES	3-4 TIMES	5 OR MORE TIMES
c. Lung cancer from smoking	NEVER	1-2 TIMES	3-4 TIMES	5 OR MORE TIMES
d. Lung cancer from radon in your home	NEVER	1-2 TIMES	3-4 TIMES	5 OR MORE TIMES
e. Chemical residues in or on foods you buy	NEVER	1-2 TIMES	3-4 TIMES	5 OR MORE TIMES
f. Household hazardous chemicals (such as cleaners, paints etc.)	NEVER	1-2 TIMES	3-4 TIMES	5 OR MORE TIMES
g. AIDS	NEVER	1-2 TIMES	3-4 TIMES	5 OR MORE TIMES

26) Within the ***past month***, about how many times would you say you have talked with your neighbors about the following topics? **(Please include face-to-face and telephone conversations.)**

	Times discussed with neighbors this month? (Please circle your responses.)			
a. Chemical contaminants in drinking water	NEVER	1-2 TIMES	3-4 TIMES	5 OR MORE TIMES
b. Heart disease caused by diet and lack of exercise	NEVER	1-2 TIMES	3-4 TIMES	5 OR MORE TIMES
c. Lung cancer from smoking	NEVER	1-2 TIMES	3-4 TIMES	5 OR MORE TIMES
d. Lung cancer from radon in your home	NEVER	1-2 TIMES	3-4 TIMES	5 OR MORE TIMES
e. Chemical residues in or on foods you buy	NEVER	1-2 TIMES	3-4 TIMES	5 OR MORE TIMES
f. Household hazardous chemicals (such as cleaners, paints etc.)	NEVER	1-2 TIMES	3-4 TIMES	5 OR MORE TIMES
g. AIDS	NEVER	1-2 TIMES	3-4 TIMES	5 OR MORE TIMES

27) Within the ***past month***, about how many times would you say you have talked with experts, professionals, or other highly knowledgeable people about the following topics? **(Please include face-to-face and telephone conversations.)**

	Times discussed with experts this month? (Please circle your responses.)			
a. Chemical contaminants in drinking water	NEVER	1-2 TIMES	3-4 TIMES	5 OR MORE TIMES
b. Heart disease caused by diet and lack of exercise	NEVER	1-2 TIMES	3-4 TIMES	5 OR MORE TIMES
c. Lung cancer from smoking	NEVER	1-2 TIMES	3-4 TIMES	5 OR MORE TIMES
d. Lung cancer from radon in your home	NEVER	1-2 TIMES	3-4 TIMES	5 OR MORE TIMES
e. Chemical residues in or on foods you buy	NEVER	1-2 TIMES	3-4 TIMES	5 OR MORE TIMES
f. Household hazardous chemicals (such as cleaners, paints etc.)	NEVER	1-2 TIMES	3-4 TIMES	5 OR MORE TIMES
g. AIDS	NEVER	1-2 TIMES	3-4 TIMES	5 OR MORE TIMES

28) There is considerable disagreement as to what causes many of our health related risks. Some people believe we as individuals are largely to blame because of our lifestyles, etc. Others believe that business, industry or government are to blame because of products they make and sell, or because of ineffective public policy. **Who do you think is MOST responsible for the following dangers to health?**

	Most to blame for this problem? (Please circle your responses.)		
a. **Chemical contamination of drinking water**..	INDIVIDUALS MOSTLY	EVERYONE SHARES THE BLAME	BUSINESS INDUSTRY GOVERNMENT
b. **Pesticides and chemical residues in our foods**	INDIVIDUALS MOSTLY	EVERYONE SHARES THE BLAME	BUSINESS INDUSTRY GOVERNMENT
c. **Low level radioactive waste**	INDIVIDUALS MOSTLY	EVERYONE SHARES THE BLAME	BUSINESS INDUSTRY GOVERNMENT

29) Which income category best describes the annual gross income (before taxes) for all wage earners in your immediate family living at this address last year? **(Please circle one letter.)**

a. **Less than $10,000**
b. **$10,000-$19,999**
c. **$20,000-$29,999**
d. **$30,000-$39,999**
e. **$40,000-$49,999**
f. **$50,000-$59,999**
g. **$60,000 or more**

30) How many children and other adults live in your house most of the time? *(Don't include, for example, week-end visitations, etc.)* **(Please write in the number of children for each age group.)**

______**No children living at home**
______**Under 6 years old**
______**6 to 12 years old**
______**13 to 18 years old**
______**Over 18**
______**Other adults (don't include yourself)**

31) How many years did you attend school? **(Please circle one letter.)**

a. **Elementary School (1-8 Years)**
b. **Attended High School (9-11 years)**
c. **Graduated High School (12 years)**
d. **Attended College**
e. **Graduated College**

32) Are you **Male**_____ or **Female**_____?

33) How old were you on your last birthday? ___________YEARS

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34) What is your occupation? **(Please circle one letter.)**

- **a. Clerical**
- **b. Professional** (Teacher, Lawyer, etc.)
- **c. Managerial**
- **d. Technician**
- **e. Labor** (factory/construction, etc.)
- **f. Own my own business**
- **g. Sales**
- **h. Farmer**
- **i. Homemaker (not employed outside home)**
- **j. Retired, unemployed**
- **k. Other (specify)**

  ____

35) Do you own or rent your home/apartment?**(Please circle one letter.)** Own Rent
Other____________

36) How many years have you lived in this community? __________YEARS

37) Which of the following best describes the community where you live? **(Please circle one letter.)**

- **a. Farm**
- **b. Rural but not farm**
- **c. Under 2,500 population**
- **d. Between 2,500 and 25,000 population**
- **e. Between 25,000 and 50,000 population**
- **f. Between 50,000 and 100,000 population**
- **g. More than 100,000 population**

38) Do you have plans *to leave* your present home/apartment or community within the next four years?

- **a. No plans to leave this house/apartment**
- **b. Probably move but stay in this community**
- **c. Probably will leave this community**
- **d. Not sure**

39) Do you consider yourself: **(Please circle one letter.)**

- **a. Black/African-American**
- **b. Hispanic**
- **c. Asian**
- **d. White**
- **e. Other______**

40) Are there any comments you would like to make?

(Thanks for your cooperation. Please return this survey in the enclosed postage paid envelope.)

Reliability of Variable Indexes

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha
Mass Media	
♦ Newspaper news	.85
Local newspaper	
Community news	
National news	
♦ Television News	.74
National news	
Local news	
News documentaries	
♦ Science Information	.73
Science books	
Environment books	
Science magazines	
Science TV	
♦ Health Information	.69
Health books	
Exercise books	
Women's magazines	
Medical books	
♦ Newspaper health	.85
Health news	
Food news	
Environment news	
Interpersonal	
♦ Spouse	.84
♦ Neighbor	.84
♦ Expert	.83
Societal Risk Judgment	
♦ Involuntary	.82
Water	
Cleaners	
Radon	
Food	
♦ Voluntary	.69
Heart	
Smoking	
AIDS	

Personal Risk Judgment		
Water		.83
Cleaners		
Radon		
Food		
LLRW		
Heart		
Smoking		
Aids		
Self-efficacy		
♦ Personal	.55	
Smoking		
Water		
Radon		
♦ Social	.66	
Food		
Cleaners		
AIDS		
LLRW		

Freedom of Expression: How Much Will the Public Tolerate?

Daniel Riffe

and

Charles F. Aust

College of Communication
The University of Alabama
(205) 348-8617

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Freedom of Expression: How Much Will the Public Tolerate?

When the Supreme Court in 1989 extended legal protection to public burning of the American flag as a mode of expression, many felt the Court had gone too far. Surely, they argued, this interpretation strained the freedom of expression explicit in the Bill of Rights--a freedom already extended to protect entertainment media, sexually explicit material, and information threatening national security, not to mention the demonstrations and marches of extremist political groups.

The flag is a symbol linked with deeply held values such as patriotism, valor and duty to country. Flag-burning destroys an icon whose intrinsic symbolic value may, for some, be as important as the *symbolic act of expression* that flag-burning represents. One writer has thus described burning the American flag as an act "so repugnant to many loyal Americans that it produces outrage."[1]

But others would argue that the absolute nature of Constitutionally guaranteed freedom of expression must be maintained, even at the cost of allowing the desecration of an American flag. The issue then becomes one of deeply held beliefs about Constitutionally protected freedom of speech, and begs the question of what is or is not "speech."

How do citizens view flag-burning and other forms of political and public expression? This analysis of July 1989 (just after the Supreme Court's ruling) public opinion data from a phone survey of Alabama citizens 1) examines tolerance for freedom of expression in general and its specific manifestations, including "symbolic speech" such as flag-burning; 2) attempts to measure via Guttman scale analysis whether there is any "order" among those manifestations; and 3) tests the relationship of tolerance to various demographic variables.

Background

Verbal and physical acts of political expression and dissent have been part of

American political culture from the earliest days of anti-British sentiment, to the post-revolutionary partisanship period, to the Civil Rights and anti-war eras, to today's fair-housing marches in Georgia.

The courts have often been faced with examples of clearly "symbolic" speech (e.g., wearing of armbands, marches, participation in hunger strikes, or burning of selective service cards).[2] Many of those court decisions have been unpopular with segments of the population. But perhaps none as much as the 1989 flag-burning ruling.

Are citizens who are outraged by such rulings opposed to individuals' rights to profess their beliefs or opinions?

Probably not. Several studies have shown that Americans generally have a high "tolerance for nonconformity" and are willing even to cede freedom of expression to minorities seen at times as threats to social order. For example, Nunn, Crockett and Williams found in 1973 that 53% of their national sample would allow an admitted Communist to speak in their community (the percentage reached 72% for letting a Socialist speak).[3] Even during the Cold War-, Red Scare-, early 1950s, Stouffer found 27% would permit the Communist to speak and 58% the Socialist.[4]

But in both of those national surveys, the researchers were concerned with tolerance for nonconformity, and their examination of speech or expression per se was basically limited to one form: making a speech in the community. (However, Nunn, et al., also asked whether demonstrations against the Vietnam war should be allowed.)

In a 1979 national survey, Immerwahr and Doble addressed several types of political expression: 73% of respondents endorsed citizens' right to peacefully picket a nuclear power plant construction site; 59% supported Nazis' right to publish their own newspaper, but only 26% their right to march through a Jewish neighborhood; and 61% agreed Communists have the right to speak as they please on television. As in the earlier studies, Immerwahr and Doble's focus was not primarily on freedom of expression. Their few "free speech" questions were mixed in with a larger battery of items on press freedom and government restrictions.[5]

And none of these studies has examined public reaction to the more sensational types of symbolic expression (burning a flag, a cross or a draft card, to name a few). Yet these are the types which seem to generate the greatest public response. (In fact, after the 1989 Supreme Court ruling, Congress was prompted by public outrage to pass the Flag Protection Act of 1989.)

Clearly, burning the flag is beyond the limit of "acceptable" manifestations of free expression for many people.

Do acts of political expression actually form a single continuous dimension, at least in the eyes of the public, from acceptable to offensive? Given the wide array of verbal, physical and symbolic acts of expression possible, from picketing to heckling to graffiti to silent fasting, it is difficult, on the face of it, to see these as mere points on the same continuum or dimension.

This study explored a fairly simple question: What kinds of political expression are acceptable or unacceptable to people? Using a phone survey of a representative sample of Alabamians, the study examined 12 types of public expression of political beliefs, and the demographic and other characteristics of those who found each type acceptable.

We anticipated endorsement of freedom of expression in general, but less support for flag-burning in particular, and predicted that our 12 types of expression would form a unidimensional scale (some types of expression would be acceptable to virtually all subjects, some would be acceptable to only a few, and others would be in between).

Hypotheses and Rationale

H1: Level of education will be positively related to tolerance of different forms of political expression.

With education comes awareness of others' experiences, backgrounds and views, and of the political-historical-Constitutional legitimacy of free expression as the fundamental concept underlying American democracy. Stouffer and Nunn *et al.* found a monotonic relationship between education and tolerance for nonconformity among Americans.[6] Lipset has identified studies in various other countries illustrating the same relationship.[7]

H2: Age will be negatively related to tolerance of different forms of political expression.

The notion is commonly held that with age comes rigidity in attitudes, tolerance and behavior. Karlsson and Carlsson, in fact, described a "fixation model" predicting resistance to change with increasing age.[8] Nationally, as an increasingly better-educated cohort moves into the upper age brackets, between-bracket differences could level out. We could not, however, predict such leveling in education-poor Alabama.

H3: Gender will be related to tolerance of different forms of political expression; males will be more tolerant.

Both Stouffer and Nunn *et al.* found a gender effect in their research on tolerance for nonconformity, with males higher in tolerance at both points in time (1954 and 1973).[9] Was that difference an artifact of gender-specific educational inequities (as discussed with H1, above), or the result of restrictiveness of women's socially prescribed roles in those eras? In many ways, male nonconformity is, if not encouraged, more socially acceptable than female nonconformity. Do males develop greater tolerance for nonconformity? Despite whatever advances might have been made by women, we anticipated that in role-conservative Alabama women would be less tolerant.

H4: Race will be related to tolerance of different forms of political expression; nonwhites will be more tolerant.

On the one hand, Alabama blacks identify strongly with civil rights era demonstrations and marches that contributed to what little change has occurred in the status of blacks in the state. On the other hand, symbols, demonstrations and counter-demonstrations by white groups have an equally prominent place in the state's history. A Confederate flag still flies over the statehouse, and Ku Klux Klansmen hold open parades.

Method

The data were collected by Southern Opinion Research, an independent survey research firm, during July 1989. A statewide random sample of 415 Alabama adults (18 years and older) was interviewed by phone.

Each subject was asked to agree or disagree with a variety of statements on freedom of expression, beginning with the general, "Even those with unpopular views should have the freedom to publicly express their political feelings."

Then, specific manifestations of free expression were offered, and subjects were asked to agree/disagree whether citizens should have these as "rights": to make political speeches or heckle other speakers; to picket an employer; to burn a draft card, a state flag, the Confederate flag, or the American flag; to wear an armband; to use a loudspeaker truck; to talk to shoppers in a store about religion; to wear a shirt with a swastika; or to burn a cross on one's own property. Demographic data were also obtained.

Findings and Discussion

The sample was mostly (59%) female, and 81% of subjects were white. The average age was 42 and the median was 39 years. A fifth (18.6%) had failed to complete high school, 32.9% were high school graduates, and 13% had completed college. Republicans (35.4%) and Democrats (34.2%) were represented in fairly equal numbers, and 30.4% of respondents called themselves Independents. A plurality (23.9%) were in the $20,000-30,000 income bracket, and 56% earned less than $30,000 annually.

Table 1 shows that nine of ten subjects endorsed the general idea of freedom to express publicly even unpopular political views. That agreement seems a clear indication of the pervasiveness of the tolerance principle, a principle that "the Bill of Rights established as a fundamental right of all Americans and one we like to believe is the backbone of our democracy," according to Nunn et al.[10]

Is agreement with the principle "real," or a "socially acceptable response," or an uncritically evoked stereotype--dredged up by the word "freedom"? Note the dropoff after that 91% agreement with the general principle: only 75.6% agreed that citizens have the right to make public political speeches. And only 71% endorse picketing as a form of expression.

The remaining 10 items illustrate further the difference for these Alabamians between the abstract principle of free expression and tolerance for specific manifestations. Only wearing of an armband enjoyed support of a majority, and five items gained the support of fewer than one in five respondents.

The flag-burning that was protected by the Supreme Court? Only 6.2% of Alabamians believe citizens should have the right to burn the American flag. That 6.2% may not find desecration of the flag any less offensive, of course, but they support the principle of freedom to desecrate it.

Table 1 data were ordered from largest to smallest percentage of "agrees." Do these items represent a unidimensional scale for these subjects? The descending aggregate percentages suggest it. But does an individual's tolerance for burning the American flag presuppose his/her own tolerance for burning the state flag, the confederate flag, a draft card, etc.?

To explore this question, we conducted a scale analysis. First, agreement with an item was scored '1' and a summed index of all 12 items was computed.

Then, the SAS Guttman scale analysis procedure was used. The initial "coefficient of reproducibility" for the 12-item scale was .84. This is smaller than the widely cited .90 criterion which, according to Guttman, "has been arbitrarily set" as "(a)n acceptable approximation to a perfect scale."[11]

To improve the coefficient, we removed the items that contributed the most "error" misclassifications (individuals who did not follow the step-wise pattern--e.g., the "deviant" who would agree that burning the American flag was acceptable, but would view making a speech as unacceptable!).

(A caveat: Miller would argue that some of our items with 80% agreement or disagreement should be discarded prior to the scale analysis.[12] Guttman is less rigid, admitting that "if a sample comprises only items with extreme kinds of dichotomies, reproducibility will be automatically high," but arguing that "attempts should be made to include in the sample as wide a range of marginal distributions as possible.")[13]

Four items were culled (heckling a speech, burning a cross on one's property, speaking about religion in a store, and wearing a swastika shirt), raising the coefficient of reproducibility for the final 8-item scale to .8987, rounded to the magic .90.

The result? The items, as ordered in the tables but excluding the four culled items (whose percentages of agreement are shown nonetheless), form a unidimensional scale. We can predict the pattern of each respondent's agreement by knowing the last item s/he agreed with. E.g., someone who will tolerate use of a loudspeaker truck will also tolerate wearing an armband, picketing, and speech-making.

Table 2 reports the mean scores on both the 12-item summed scale and the 8-item Guttman scale, along with percentages of agreement, for different education levels. Recall that H1 predicted that level of education would be positively related to tolerance of different forms of political expression.

Respondents were grouped by four education levels: adults who had not graduated high school, high school graduates, those with some post-high school education, and college graduates. Chi-square was computed for frequencies agreeing, and group means on the two scale scores were tested using a oneway analysis of variance (the probabilities are for the attained F-values).

The first hypothesis was clearly supported. Both the summed index and the Guttman scale showed monotonic relationships with education. More education was related to greater acceptance of varied forms of expression. But the individual item percentages reveal where--and how--the groups differ. The largest percentage differences, for example, were between non-high school grads and college grads on wearing black armbands and shirts with swastikas.

H2 predicted that age would be negatively related to tolerance for different forms of political expression. To test the hypothesis, respondents were placed in five age groups (see Table 3). Again, the hypothesis was supported in the anova, for both scales. And again, the relationship was monotonic; the older the respondent, the less tolerant. The most noticeable individual item differences were between the oldest group and the 27-33 group on wearing the armband, and between the oldest group and the younger groups on the appropriateness of picketing an employer. That oldest cohort's Depression-era experiences may continue to influence its members' sense of the appropriateness of picketing an employer.

Table 4 data test H3 (males more tolerant) and H4 (nonwhites more tolerant). H3 was supported in the anova. Note, however, that while male scale scores showed more tolerance, females were more likely to agree with the general principle of freedom of speech. Yet no individual manifestation of free speech was supported by more than 70% of the women.

H4, of racial differences, was not supported, even though several individual items did show significant white-non-white chi-squares.

Conclusions

Obviously, there are limitations to the data reported here. Alabama is certainly not a representative state. It is politically, religiously and socially conservative. It is economically disadvantaged and poorly educated. Its culture is plagued by "-isms" of every ilk: sexism, racism and anti-intellectualism.

Moreover, events of recent months may have influenced the intensity of Alabamians' attitudes toward freedom of expression. Specifically, the sense of patriotism and pride with the success of the U.S. military adventure in Iraq might have had an impact, though most likely to make even fewer respondents judge flag-burning to be tolerable as symbolic speech.

Finally, we cannot claim content validity for our set of specific manifestations of political expression. Other types of expression might have evoked different responses from our subjects (and might not have followed the predicted and observed patterns of age, education and gender differences).

But, limitations aside, we have brought together a variety of those manifestations, far more than explored in the studies cited above.

And if we have broken new ground by providing a basis for assessing the comparative offensiveness of different expressive acts, we have also found with the data on free expression what previous researchers found about individual differences and general tolerance for nonconformity: men are more tolerant of varied forms of political expression, as are those who are younger and more educated.

We have also shown how Alabamians may embrace--or claim to embrace--a general ideal or principle, even though, when pinned down, they find some manifestations of the principle unembraceable, regardless of court rulings. Only a small percentage of our subjects supported unequivocally the principle of free but politically unpopular speech up to and including flag-burning.

Reaction to the Supreme Court flag-burning ruling, at least in Alabama, apparently did not reflect a generalized anti-free speech sentiment. But burning the U.S. flag was, for all but a very few, going too far.

Notes

1. James A. Michener, "Are There Limits to Free Speech?" Parade, Nov. 18, 1990, pp. 4-6.

2. Important "symbolic speech" cases include: (burning a draft card) United States vs. O'Brien, 391 U.S. 367 (1968); (wearing an armband) Tinker vs. Des Moines Independent School Dist., 393 U.S. 503 (1969); (peaceful picketing) Milkwagon Drivers Union vs. Meadowmoor Dairies, 312 U.S. 287,293 (1941); (lunch-counter sit-ins) Garner vs. Louisiana, 368 U.S. 157, 201-02 (1961); (displaying a Communist flag) Stromberg vs. California, 283 U.S. 359 (1931); (display of a swastika) Village of Skokie vs. National Socialist Party, 69 Ill. 2d 605, 373 N.E.2d 21 (1978); (fasting by prison inmates) Zant vs. Prevatte, 248 Ga. 832, 286 S.E.2d 715 (1982).

3. Clyde Z. Nunn, Harry J. Crockett Jr., and J. Allen Williams Jr., Tolerance for Nonconformity (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1978).

4. Samuel A. Stouffer, Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1955).

5. John Immerwahr and John Doble, "Public Attitudes Toward Freedom of the Press," Public Opinion Quarterly, 46:2:177-187 (Summer 1982).

6. Stouffer, op. cit.; Nunn, et al., op. cit.

7. S.M. Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy," American Political Science Review, 53:69-105 (1959).

8. G. Karlsson and K. Carlsson, "Age, Cohorts, and the Generation of Generations," American Sociological Review, 35:710-718 (1970).

9. Stouffer, op. cit., and Nunn, et al., op. cit.

10. Nunn, et al., op. cit., p. 1.

11. Louis L. Guttman, "The Basis for Scalogram Analysis," in Gary M. Maranell (ed.) Scaling: A Sourcebook for Behavioral Scientists (Chicago: Aldine, 1974), pp.

142-171. The quote is from page 159.

12. Delbert Miller, *The Handbook of Research Design and Social Measurement* 3rd Edition (New York: David McKay Co., 1977) p. 90

13. Guttman, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

Table 1

Percentage of Subjects Tolerating Different Forms of Public Expression

Statement:	% Agree	(N)
Even those with unpopular views should have the freedom to publicly express their political feelings.	91.0	(399)
Citizens should have the right to:		
Make a speech about politics on a downtown street corner	75.6	(405)
Picket with other labor union members against a company	71.1	(384)
Wear a black armband to protest the policies of a school or other government office	53.5	(374)
Drive through a neighborhood with a loudspeaker truck advertising for a political candidate	39.8	(397)
Talk with people about a religious organization while they are walking through a store	35.6	(393)
Wear a shirt with a swastika, the symbol of the Nazi Party, on it	23.6	(399)
Burn a cross on his or her own property	23.3	(395)
Interrupt or heckle someone who is making a speech	17.0	(401)
Burn a selective service or draft card	12.3	(389)
Burn the Confederate flag as part of a political protest	10.0	(402)
Burn the Alabama state flag as part of a political protest	8.0	(401)
Burn the American flag as part of a political protest	6.2	(403)

Table 2

Percentage of Subjects Tolerating Forms of Public Expression, by Education

Statement: / Education Level:	Not H.S. Grad %	H.S. Grad %	Some Post HS %	Coll. Grad %
Even those with unpopular views should have the freedom to publicly express their political feelings.	91.8	89.1	89.3	95.2
Citizens should have the right to:				
Make a speech about politics on a downtown street corner	64.9	70.5	82.3	84.5**
Picket, with other members of a labor union, against a company	63.8	64.0	75.0	83.8**
Wear a black armband to protest the policies of a school or other government office	30.6	51.2	57.0	71.3***
Drive through a neighborhood with a loudspeaker truck advertising for a political candidate	28.0	41.1	41.3	47.6
Talk with people about a religious organization while they are walking through a store	38.9	29.0	34.9	45.0
Wear a shirt with a swastika, the symbol of the Nazi party, on it	4.2	17.4	27.7	44.6***
Burn a cross on his or her own property	12.0	19.0	27.3	35.4**
Interrupt or heckle someone who is making a speech	12.0	16.0	20.0	19.3
Burn a selective service or draft card	2.8	10.1	15.6	20.5**
Burn the Confederate flag as part of a political protest	0.0	6.1	14.0	19.8***
Burn the Alabama state flag as part of a political protest	1.3	3.9	12.4	14.6**
Burn the American flag as part of a political protest	1.3	1.5	11.7	11.0***
(N=)	(62)	(123)	(107)	(78)

** P<.01 by Chi-Square *** p<.001 by Chi-Square

8-item Guttman scale mean score, by education	1.76	2.33	2.93	3.42
Oneway anova F probability:		.0001		
12-item Summed scale mean score, by education	2.40	3.11	3.97	4.82
Oneway anova F probability:		.0001		

Table 3

Percentage of Subjects Tolerating Forms of Public Expression, by Age

Statement: / Age in Years:	18-26 %	27-33 %	34-44 %	45-59 %	60-86 %
Even those with unpopular views should have the freedom to publicly express their political feelings.	90.6	94.6	90.4	87.0	92.4
Citizens should have the right to:					
Make a speech about politics on a downtown street corner	76.5	78.7	81.7	74.1	66.7
Picket, with other members of a labor union, against a company	78.6	76.4	74.7	70.3	54.1**
Wear a black armband to protest the policies of a school or other government office	58.8	64.9	56.3	54.9	30.6***
Drive through a neighborhood with a loudspeaker truck advertising for a political candidate	39.0	38.9	41.0	47.4	33.3
Talk with people about a religious organization while they are walking through a store	30.5	32.9	41.3	41.6	31.3
Wear a shirt with a swastika, the symbol of the Nazi party, on it	24.7	34.2	27.5	20.3	12.3*
Burn a cross on his or her own property	27.4	29.7	25.3	15.8	18.5
Interrupt or heckle someone who is making a speech	18.8	15.1	14.8	20.0	16.0
Burn a selective service or draft card	15.7	11.0	14.7	15.6	5.0
Burn a Confederat flag as part of a political protest	14.3	17.1	11.1	7.6	0.0**
Burn an Alabama state flag as part of a political protest	12.9	12.0	11.3	3.8	0.0**
Burn the American flag as part of a political protest	10.6	6.6	8.9	3.8	1.2
(N=)	(82)	(72)	(71)	(71)	(72)

* p<.05 by Chi-Square
** p<.01 by Chi-Square
*** p<.001 by Chi-Square

8-item Guttman scale mean score, by age	3.00	2.88	2.81	2.62	1.74
Oneway anova F probability:			.0001		
12-item Summed scale mean score, by age	3.99	3.94	3.85	3.56	2.48
Oneway anova F probability:			.001		

Table 4

Percentage of Subjects Tolerating Forms of Public Expression, by Gender, Race

Statement:	Male/Female		White/Nonwhite	
	%	%	%	%
Even those with unpopular views should have the freedom to publicly express their political feelings.	88.1	92.9	90.7	92.2
Citizens should have the right to:				
Make a speech about politics on a downtown street corner	84.1	69.7**	77.7	66.7*
Picket, with other members of a labor union, against a company	75.0	68.3	71.4	69.7
Wear a black armband to protest the policies of a school or other government office	60.9	48.2*	53.8	52.1
Drive through a neighborhood with a loudspeaker truck advertising for a political candidate	43.4	37.4	40.3	37.7
Talk with people about a religious organization while they are walking through a store	33.3	37.1	36.2	33.3
Wear a shirt with a swastika, the symbol of the Nazi party, on it	29.0	19.8*	23.4	24.3
Burn a cross on his or her own property	27.2	20.6	21.9	29.3
Interrupt or heckle someone who is making a speech	19.9	15.0	15.7	22.4**
Burn a selective service or draft card	16.6	9.5*	10.1	22.5
Burn the Confederate flag as part of a political protest	14.9	6.6**	8.5	16.2*
Burn the Alabama state flag as part of a political protest	11.2	5.8	6.5	14.5*
Burn the American flag as part of a political protest	7.5	5.4	4.9	11.8*
(N=)	(156)	(218)	(303)	(71)

* p<.05 by Chi-Square (male vs. female OR white vs. nonwhite)

** p<.01 by Chi-Square (male vs. female OR white vs. nonwhite)

8-item Guttman scale mean score, by gender/race	2.97	2.36	2.58	2.74
Oneway anova F probability:	.001		n.s.	
12-item Summed scale mean score, by gender/race	4.01	3.25	3.51	3.76
Oneway anova F probability:	.01		n.s.	

Economic Recession and the News

Robert L. Stevenson
William J. Gonzenbach
Prabu David

The School of Journalism and Mass Communication
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
CB# 3365, Howell Hall
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3365
919/962-1204

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in Boston, MA, August 1991

Economic Recession and the News

Introduction

The headline in the Washington *Post* captured the problem succinctly: "Is the Economy Suffering From Media Malady? Critics Charge Coverage Is Making the Downturn Worse" (Kurtz, 1990). The issue that prompted the story was the latest example of the old question of the impact of news media coverage, especially negative coverage. "Whether or not the media exacerbate bad news by reporting it is a chicken-and-egg argument," the *Post* concluded.

True enough, but in this paper, we will try to sort out the influences of media coverage and "real" economic indicators on public perceptions of the state of the economy. The specific research question is whether evidence supports the contention that media coverage influences public perception of the state of the economy, the opposing contention that media coverage reflects and, therefore, follows public opinion or neither. Monthly measures of public opinion, the government's leading economic indicators and frequency of "recession" articles in the New York *Times* for 32 months, beginning July 1988, are analyzed with time-series procedures to address the question of time order that often eludes chicken-and-egg (and media effects) questions.

We consider the specific issue as part of a broader question of media influence, which belongs to the quasi- or middle-range theories such as the "scary world" or "bad news" schools. These, in turn, are considered as part of what has become known as the "return to mass effects" approach that characterized communication research in the 1970s and 1980s (McQuail, 1987). This study differs from most of the previous research in its use of aggregate measures and of relatively new time-series analysis methods that have not frequently been used in studies of media effects.

Background

The debate over economic "media malady" began in the fall of 1990 when an already declining consumer confidence took a sharp drop. The pulse of the nation's consumers comes from a number of sources, but the most frequently cited source is a monthly survey sponsored by the Conference Board. It comprises measures of perceptions of current conditions and of expectations for the future. The sharp drop beginning in August 1990, of course, reflected anxiety about war in the Middle East and long-standing failure to deal with basic economic problems in the country (Thomas, 1990). However, reporting about the economy was often cited as a contributing factor.

A Washington real estate newsletter put blame for the region's real estate slump squarely on the press (Kurtz, 1990):

> We believe that the constant barrage of negative articles in The Post has transformed a "soft landing" into a much more severe slowdown. We've had week after week of badly researched gloom and doom in the paper, and it has affected people's confidence in real estate as an investment ... When it comes to real estate, *The Post* is making the news, not reporting it.

The complaint against the media was widespread, but few journalists were impressed. The *Post*'s economics columnist, Hobart Rowan, dismissed it as a perennial complaint of some business leaders who think "the media ought deliberately to serve up a more optimistic appraisal, like sportscasters rooting for the home team" (Rowan, 1990). *Newsweek* columnist Robert J. Samuelson called it "the wackiest idea in circulation these days." He said the charge of economic media malady was "wonderfully simple -- and utterly wrong" (Samuelson, 1990).

The complaint of too much "bad news" is neither new nor limited to the economy, of course. Almost every identifiable social group and most public figures have the same complaint. In the long-running New World Information Order (NWIO) debate, the charge was made against dominant Western media that coverage of the Third World was limited mostly to "coups and earthquakes," a shorthand phrase for sporadic coverage focused mostly on violence and disruption (Masmoudi, 1979). The Western definition of news as the exceptional event, critics charged, was misleading, unfair and dysfunctional to development.

Closer to home, similar charges can be heard from just about every identifiable group or special interest, from women, blacks and greens but also from big business and the military, liberals as well as conservatives. Nobody, it seems, likes its media coverage or considers it fair or accurate. Most of the complaints are about adequacy, fairness and accuracy of coverage, but almost always the issue of excessive negativism -- too much emphasis on disruption and aberration -- creeps in. After considering three recent books -- one arguing in favor of massive rightwing bias, two for massive leftwing bias in the American media -- David Shaw of the Los Angeles *Times* concluded that the charges of systematic political bias failed despite the "cynicism-cum-negativism that often distorts media coverage in general" and an occupational "ghoulish instinct for the jugular" (Shaw, 1991). In rejecting the charge of bias, he seemed to be acknowledging the charge of excessive negativism.

The controversial study of the media elite by the Lichters and Rothman found a psychological explanation for journalists' "propensities toward negativism, an adversarial posture, and the identification of one's professional interests with the public interest" (Lichter et al., 1986, p. 298).

They quote Meg Greenfield's reaction to service as a juror for the Pulitzer Prize: "'Out there' -- wherever that is -- people may be smiling and humming ... but the world according to journalism is, on the contrary, a surpassingly bleak place" (p. 298).

Ben Wattenberg, demographer, sociologist, political adviser and occasional journalist, was one of the few media critics to offer an interpretation that explained why both liberals and conservatives, both Democrats and Republicans, all sides of almost any public debate, could claim bias. His answer, which formed the title of his book, *The Good News Is the Bad News Is Wrong*, acknowledges that reporters too often get the story wrong (Wattenberg, 1985, p. 20):

> But that's not the real problem with the media. The problem is that they are missing the biggest stories of our era -- about progress -- and missing them regularly, consistently, structurally, and probably unwittingly. It's not that they are often getting the story wrong. They are often getting the wrong story.

A focus on exceptional events such as coups and earthquakes abroad and disruptions and aberrations at home rather than slow change, usually positive, is a common thread among these critiques of American journalism. They also fit neatly into several working assumptions about the role and influence of media generally.

Gerbner's work on the scary world of heavy TV users is both widely known and disputed. On less than overwhelming statistical evidence, it argues that excessive exposure to television leads to perceptions of the world as excessively violent, dangerous and alienating (Gerbner and Gross, 1976; Hirsh, 1980). The cultural indicators project, from which the "cultivation hypothesis" was developed, was itself linked to the studies of TV violence --

including violence in the news -- that became known collectively as the Surgeon General's studies (Lowery and DeFleur, 1983).

A very different methodology but similar logic is used by the Glasgow Group, which has created its own school out of deconstructing British media coverage of violence and argues that the medium is used to maintain a hegemonic control over peripheral groups that, if positively presented, might threaten the power of traditional institutions (The Glasgow Group, 1976, 1980, 1985).

It should be noted that all of these fragments of theory are based on an assumption of mass, direct media effects, not indirect effects, such as agenda-setting, or limited effects, such as the two-step flow. From the Washington Realtor to Wattenberg to Gerbner, the argument is that news coverage of the world transmits a negatively distorted picture of the world to audiences who then respond to that skewed version of reality. The result may be to act in such a way that the economy really is affected, which gets reported in a distorted negative fashion, which, in turn, influences public opinion and public behavior further, something like Noelle-Neumann's "spiral of silence" theory.

We cannot unravel the dynamics of a spiral of media influence, but we can use the power of time-series analysis and simple, computer-assisted content analysis to disentangle some of the linkages between these factors and the abrupt changes in public attitudes toward the economy over the past two years.

Method

This study attempts to determine whether evidence supports the contention that media coverage influences public perception of the state of the economy, the opposing contention that media coverage reflects and, therefore, follows public opinion or neither. Kepplinger et al. (1989) suggest the comparison of media content and public opinion with time series data can provide insights into the temporal relationship between two series and can contribute to answering a classic communication research question: are the mass media a "mirror" or public opinion or an "organ" of public opinion (p. 327). They suggest, based upon recommendations of Watt and van den Berg (1978), that four theoretical assumptions can account for this relationship: 1) the mass media create public opinion -- the correlation between media content at one time and public opinion at a later time should be stronger than in any other direction; 2) the mass media mirror public opinion -- the correlation between media content and public opinion at the same time should be stronger than any other correlation; 3) public opinion creates media reporting -- the correlation between public opinion at one time and media content at a latter time should be stronger than any other correlation; and 4) there is no link between media content and public opinion -- there is no significant correlations between two sets of data. This method allows one to determine the relationship between two univariate series, but it does not allow one to control for the effects of a third variable. While we wish to determine the relationship between the media and public perceptions about the state of the economy, it is important to control for a measure of the "reality" of the state of the economy (Neuman, 1990, p. 165). Scherer (1991) suggests that one can work with regression coefficients in the same way that correlation coefficients are typically used in time-series analysis. This method also allows one to determine the influence of a third control variable, which in this case is the economic "reality" measure of the government's index of leading economic indicators.

The Data

The study included two measures of consumer confidence from the Consumer Research Center of The Conference Board. The monthly measures, which spanned the months from July 1988 to February 1991, were the present situation index and the expectation index. The present situation index and the expectation index were derived from five questions in national, monthly mail surveys of approximately 3,000 adults, 18 and over:

1) "How would you rate the present general business conditions in your area -- Good, Normal or Bad?"
2) "Six months from now, do you think they will be -- Better, Same or Worse?"
3) "What would you say about available jobs in your area right now -- Plenty, Not So Many or Hard to Get?"
4) Six months from now, do you think there will be -- More Jobs, Same or Fewer Jobs?"
5) How would you guess your total family income to be six months from now -- Higher, Same or Lower?"

The positive, negative and neutral response proportions to each question were seasonally adjusted by the Conference Board, using seasonal factors that are currently based on monthly data from 1978-1988 and that are updated periodically. Non-responses were eliminated and seasonally adjusted frequency distributions of answers to each of the five questions were then forced to 100%. Any rounding errors were applied to the neutral category. This produced the three percentages for each of the five questions (15 in all) published in the Conference Board Report. For each of the five questions, the positive figure was divided by the sum of the positive and negative to yield a proportion, which the Conference Board calls the "relative value" (this figure is over 0.5 if the positives outnumber the negatives). For each question, the average "relative value" for the calendar year 1985 was then used as a benchmark or base -- the "relative values" for the current month were divided by the base and multiplied by 100 to yield the index value for each question. The indexes are then averaged together as follows:

Present Situation Index: average of indices for questions 1 and 3.

Expectation Index: average of indices for questions 2, 4 and 5.

The measure of the media's coverage of recession comprised the monthly frequency of articles about recession in the New York *Times* from July 1988 to February 1991. The measure was created with a computer content analysis. The New York *Times* was chosen to represent the media agenda about recession for several reasons. It is the elite U.S. newspaper (Winter and Eyal, 1981). The *Times* is a model from which television networks derive their news judgments (Brown, 1971). With regard to the 1972 presidential election, front-page coverage in the *Times* meant prominent coverage in every other paper in America (Crouse, 1972). News flows downward from the elite dailies (Breed, 1955). And, the *Times* coverage was more strongly related to measures of public concern about the drug issue than that of any other medium (Shoemaker et al., 1989). We used the frequency of articles about recession for pragmatic reasons: the costs of estimating column inches or measuring the number of words per story would have been prohibitive; and, we felt the census of stories provided a better picture of the media reality for our purposes. In addition, research indicates that frequency may be as strong a measure as column inches. Stone and McCombs (1981) found a Pearson correlation coefficient of +.90 between the number of stories and the number of column inches devoted to a variety of topics.

Finally, the "reality" of the state of the economy was measured with the United States Department of Commerce's Leading Economic Indicators (Fox, 1990). We included monthly measures from July 1988 to January 1991. The February 1991 data were not available at the time of this analysis The index was based on 11 components: 1) average work week of production workers in manufacturing; 2) average weekly claims for state unemployment insurance; 3) new orders for consumer goods and materials, adjusted for inflation; 4) vendor performance (companies receiving slower deliveries for suppliers); 5) contracts and orders for plant and equipment, adjusted for inflation; 6) new building permits issued; 7) change in manufacturers' unfilled orders for durable goods; 8) change in sensitive materials prices; 9) index of stock prices; 10) money supply, adjusted for inflation; and, 11) index of consumer expectations.

Models and Statistical Analysis

We created four regression models, two with the present situation index and two with the expectation index, to address the research question of whether the media was driving opinion or vice versa, while controlling for the "reality" of the state of the economy. First, we ran each model with the independent variables lagged at month 0; then we ran the models with each independent variable lagged at months -1 to -6. The four model are:

$$PSI = b_0 + b_1 (NYT) + b_2 (LEI) + v_t$$
$$NYT = b_0 + b_1 (PSI) + b_2 (LEI) + v_t$$

$$EXI = b_0 + b_1 (NYT) + b_2 (LEI) + v_t$$
$$NYT = b_0 + b_1 (EXI) + b_2 (LEI) + v_t$$

where, PSI is the present situation index, EXI is the expectation index, NYT is the frequency of recession articles in the New York *Times*, and LEI is the leading economic indicators index. b_0 is the intercept parameter, b_1 and b_2 are the regression weights and v_t is an autocorrelated error term.

One of the basic assumptions of regression is that the error term must be independent and normally distributed with a mean of zero. However, this is the not case with time series data, where the error term is dependent or autocorrelated. Under this condition, the ordinary least squares estimates provided by regression are not very dependable. Hence, we had to use a regression procedure that does error correction on time dependent data. According to the autoregression procedure in SAS PC+, the error term is written out as follows and then the parameters estimated:

$$v_t = e_t - a_1 v_{t-1} - \dots - a_p v_{t-p}$$

where the a_i is the autoregressive parameters and e is the random error term. The unstandardized Yule-Walker estimates for the betas and the R^2 for for the models were estimated with the procedure. For the purposes of analysis and comparison, we standardized the coefficients after the models were estimated by dividing the respective parameter estimate by the ratio of the sample standard deviation of the dependent variable to the sample standard deviation of the regressor (SAS Institute, p. 789). In that we used a time-series analysis, it was not appropriate to standardize the four series before analysis because of the effects of standardization upon the error terms. Finally, we estimated the significance levels for the coefficients with the Bonferroni t-statistic because we estimated each model seven times and thus enhanced the random chance of significance (Pedhazur, 1973, p.315). A significance level of .05 was divided by 7, for a new significance level of .007.

Results

The results focus on two parameters: first, a descriptive analysis of the univariate series, and second, an analysis of the regression models.

The plots of the univariate series (Figure 1) offer some important insights into the four measures. The NYT index indicated a very mild increase in media attention during the second half of 1988, followed by a mild dip in February 1989 and a cyclical pattern of increases and decreases until August

1990 when media attention rocketed to a peak in January 1991, which was then followed by a slight decrease in February 1991. In sharp contrast, both of the public perception measures, PSI and EXI, held fairly steady until January 1990, when they then began a strong decrease, i.e., weakened confidence, that continued downward until the end of our analysis period. The "reality" measure, LEI, was very steady until August 1990 when it began a steady decrease until the end of the analysis period (the variance may not be obvious in the plot due to scaling effects).

The regression analysis (Table 1; Figures 2 and 3) generally supported the argument that when one controls for the "reality" of the economic situation, public perception had a stronger effect on media coverage than the reverse, though evidence was also indicated that the media drove public perception.

In regard to the present situation index, the effect of public perception on the media was significant from lags -6 to 0, with the strongest effect indicated at lag -3. The effect of the media on public perception was significant at lags -5 to 0, though the strongest effects were indicated at lags -4 to 0. However, Figure 2 indicates that the effect of public perception on the media was stronger than the reverse throughout the lags. The results generally support the conclusion that public perception strongly influenced media coverage, when controlling for economic "reality," but that the media in turn picked up public concern and influenced public perception at a later date.

This cyclical effect was also supported for the expectation index. The effect of public perception upon the media, when controlling for economic "reality," was significant from lags -6 to 0, again with the strongest effect indicated at lag -3. The effect of the media on public perception was significant at lags -4 to 0, with the strongest effect indicated at lag -2. As with the present situation index, the effect of public perception on the media was stronger than the reverse throughout the lags (Figure 3). These results also support the conclusion that public perception strongly influences media coverage, when controlling for economic "reality," but that the media in turn pick up public concern and influence public perception at a later date.

The results also indicated that the economic "reality" measure, LEI, was only significant for the expectation index. LEI mildly predicted expectation at lag 0. In this case, the sign of the coefficient made sense; LEI was positively related to expectation. LEI also mildly predicted media coverage at lag -6; however, in this case the positive coefficient suggested that an increase in LEI predicted an increase in recession coverage. This appears to be a counter-intuitive finding, and may be the result of a randomly significant variable.

Finally, the explained variance for the models indicated that the maximum variance was explained in lag 0 for all of the models (Table 1; Figures 2 and 3). The plot of the explained variances indicated a steady increase from lags-6 to lag 0. The explained variance for media by opinion (for both PSI and EXI) and LEI was stronger than the reverse, though the differences were minor for both from lag -2 to lag 0. Generally, the models accounted for a large amount of the variance.

Analysis

The results offer evidence that public perception is a stronger predictor of media attention than the reverse, and the findings also suggest that a cyclical model may offer the best explanation of the this rather intertwined relationship -- public opinion affects media interest, which in turn heightens public interest at a later date (Gonzenbach, 1991; Erbring et al., 1980). An analysis of the nature of the issue and the business of news may offer some insight about the order and nature of the process of media and public-perception effects.

Recession is an obtrusive issue for the public; it is felt in the job market and the grocery store. The results suggest the public senses the reality of economic decline and this public sense is translated to measure of consumer confidence, which the media, who have a nose of news and an obligation to cover the news, set out to investigate and report. Public perceptions about the recession, both present situation and expectation indicators, began to drop around January 1990. It was then that industrial production, capacity utilization and civilian unemployment began to experience extremely sharp decreases ("Good News," 1991). While the public began to feel the reality of the recession, the media's interest was actually declining to one of its lowest points covered in this analysis. When the government's LEI measures began to register the declines in the economy in August 1990, the media appeared to jump on the bandwagon and coverage of the recession exploded and may have in turn affected the public's vision of the economy. The media's negative recession news appeared to begin to wane in February 1991 as news of better economic forecasts was released by the government ("Good News," 1991).

At on level, the media critics are incorrect; the results indicate that the media did not initiate a decline in public confidence. Yet, at another level, the media are part of the process of declining confidence, possibly due to the degree and nature of recession coverage. In the United States, the mass media are businesses, and as such they must capture the news and market it to the public for a profit. And, as Greenfield suggests, the creators of the media product, the journalist, have "propensities toward negativism, an adversarial posture and the identification of one's professional interests with the public interest." The results indicate the journalists identified with the public interest and created their product in response to declining public perceptions and negative economic information. The product they created may reflect their propensity toward negativism and their adversarial posture. While we respect Wattenberg's call for the big stories of progress, the reality is that conflict and negative news sells. And, the journalists, as business manufacturers, must create a marketable product. Also, as Greenfield notes, the journalists are part of a adversarial system; they check and balance the political leadership's efforts to paint the most positive of pictures through their public relations efforts. While journalists may have difficulty being objective, they do attempt to be accurate and balanced. This adversarial posture may have been heightened during the fall of 1990 in response to the mounting support for President Bush about the Gulf crises. It is interesting to note that the negative coverage of the economy grew almost in direct relation to Bush's remarkable popularity about his handling of the Gulf. Possibly it became very difficult for the journalists to critique this position given the public attitudes about press coverage of the war, so they turned their adversarial eyes homeward to a problem that certainly deserved attention and that they could approach in an adversarial fashion. While this conclusion is speculative, it may explain why they approached this news with a vengeance, thus warranting the claims of journalistic negativism.

Whatever the cause, the results suggest that the media responded to the declining public perceptions and that this heightened coverage may have in turn charged the public's concern about the issue. The process may be cyclical, and the media may overreact, but this study suggests that the media responded to economic realities and the public's concern about those realities.

Future research in this area should address two considerations. First, a better measure of economic reality may be needed. The leading economic indictors may reflect the intricacies of the economy, but we question whether they are the most effective measure of reality for the average citizen. Other options, such as unemployment rates, may be better, but they suffer from the problem of regional effects in a study of a national sample. Secondly, a more sophisticated modeling technique, such as ARIMA modeling, should be employed to control for the effects of trends and moving average components in the process. While this method requires more than 50 measurement points, it may provide additional insights into the intriguing and complex relationships of public perceptions, media perceptions and the reality of the issue.

This study offers some insights about the order effects of public perceptions and media attention, and it suggests limited evidence of mass media effects. We conclude that public perceptions influence media attention, which in turn heightens public perceptions at a later date. This cyclical process suggests the influence of mass media effects, however it intertwines them with other competing factors, which appear to be as important as the media.

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Figure 1. Plots of Present Situation Index, Expectation Index, Leading Economic Indicator and New York Times Coverage of Recession

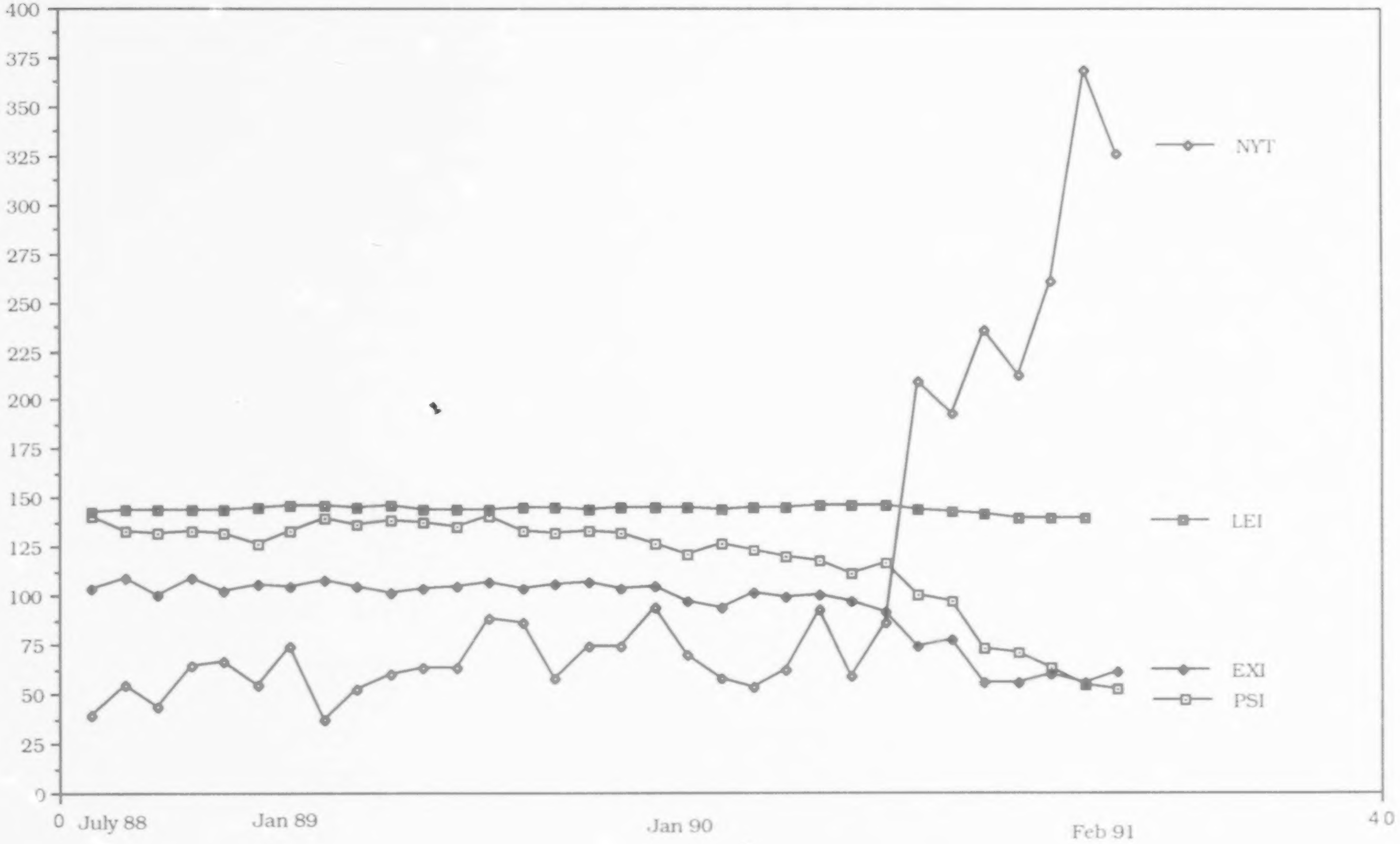


Table 1. Standardized Beta Coefficients and Explained Variance for Lagged Regression Equations

PSI = NYT + LEI

Lag	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0
B(NYT)	-.303	-.498*	-.762*	-.706*	-.710*	-.737*	-.706*
B(LEI)	-.223	-.180	-.189	.025	.130	.112	.129
R^2	.283	.450	.496	.590	.745	.771	.772

NYT = PSI + LEI

Lag	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0
B(PSI)	-.728*	-.785*	-.840*	-.877*	-.816*	-.791*	-.818*
B(LEI)	.117	.048	.072	.023	-.110	-.162	-.154
R^2	.587	.622	.696	.734	.759	.821	.848

EXI = NYT + LEI

Lag	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0
B(NYT)	-.187	-.360	-.593*	-.813*	-.930*	-.845*	-.665*
B(LEI)	-.163	-.233	-.252	-.213	-.123	-.039	.260*
R^2	.136	.315	.368	.594	.744	.698	.790

NYT = EXI + LEI

Lag	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0
B(EXI)	-.729*	-.805*	-.919*	-1.007*	-.930*	-.847*	-.783*
B(LEI)	.353*	.293	.271	.198	.018	-.098	-.114
R^2	.675	.687	.706	.783	.810	.844	.848

*$p < .007$ (Bonneforini t-Test)

Figure 2. Graph of Betas and Explained Variance for Present Situation Index Equations

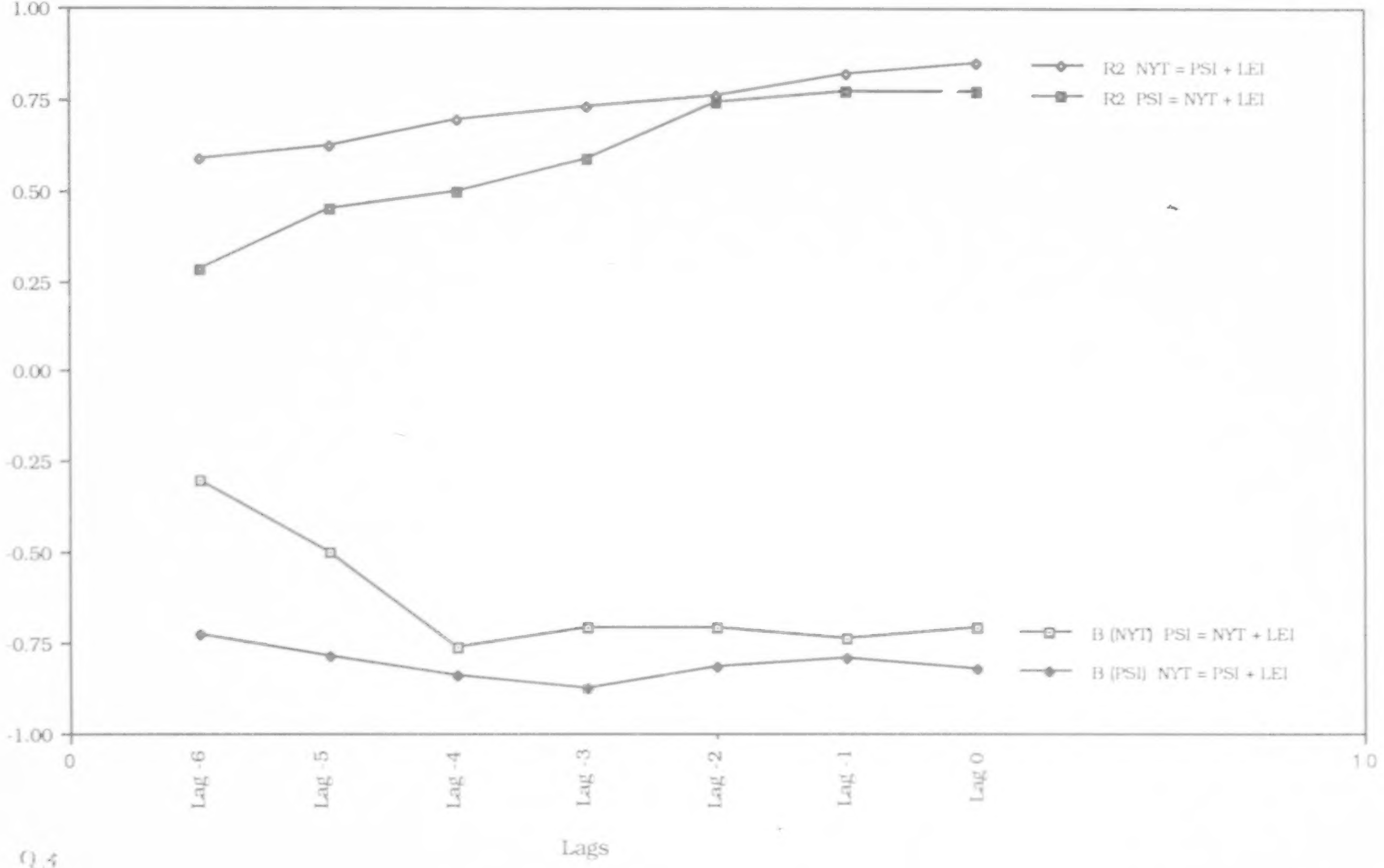
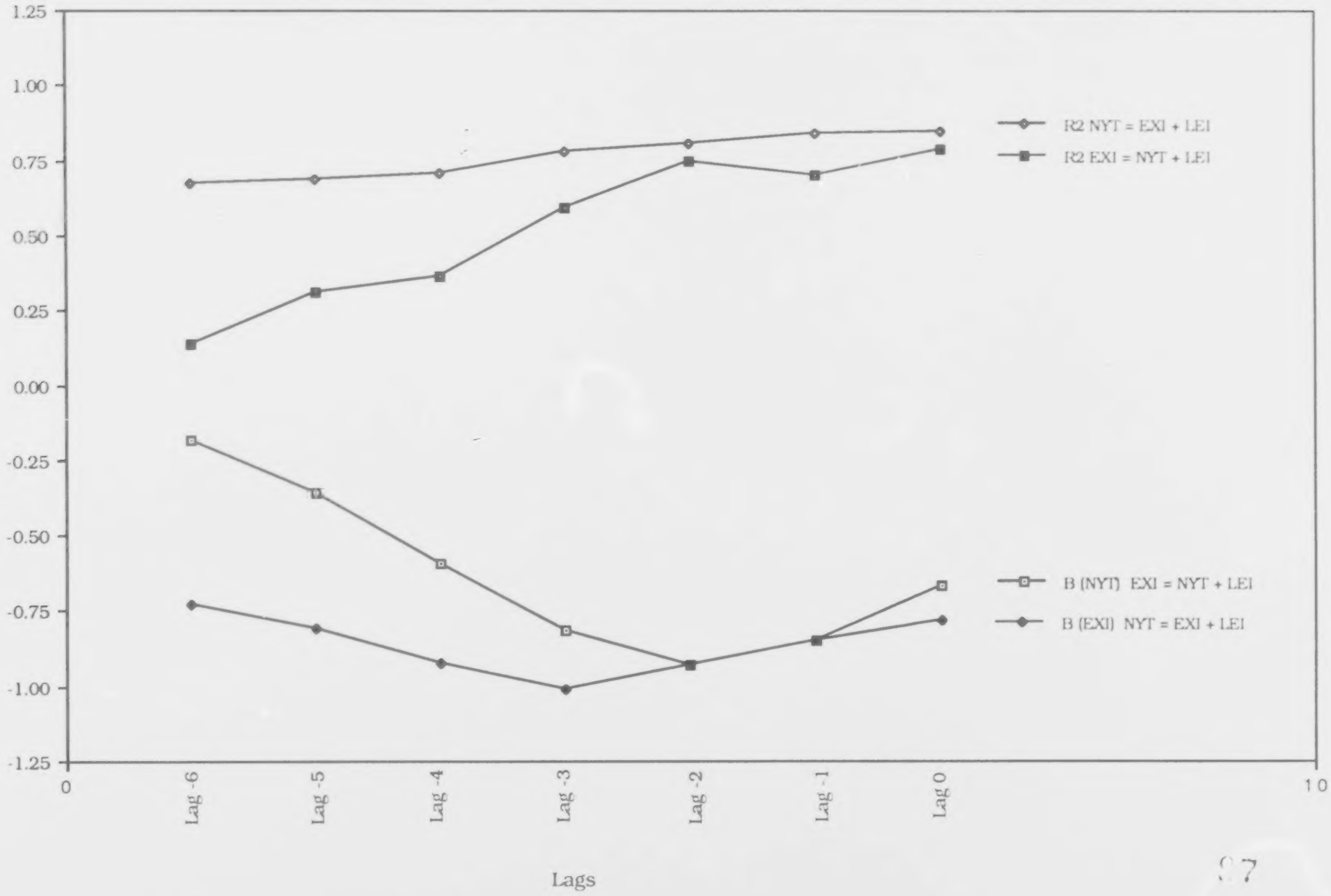


Figure 3. Graph of Betas and Explained Variance for Expectation Index Equations



Sources, "Quotas," and Civil Rights: The Press and the Civil Rights Act of 1990

Carol M. Liebler
Assistant Professor
Department of Communication
Georgia State University
Atlanta, GA 30303

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Abstract

Sources, "Quotas," and Civil Rights: The Press and the Civil Rights Act of 1990

This study focuses on the relationship between news sources and news story content. The objectives of the study are: (i) to determine what news sources were used in press coverage of the Civil Rights Act of 1990; (ii) to examine how the bill was framed by the media: as a "civil rights" or "quota" bill; and (iii) to assess how news source choice may have shaped subsequent coverage.

A content analysis was conducted of all articles on the Civil Rights Act of 1990 that were published during 1990 in The Washington Post and The Atlanta Constitution. A total of 74 stories were coded for variables including source, affiliation and description of the Act.

The findings of this study are congruent with earlier research -- journalists tend to rely on official sources and bureaucratic definitions of news. Civil rights groups are attributed less frequently than official sources, with White House sources the most commonly cited sources. News stories on the Civil Rights Act of 1990 tended to be linked to bureaucratic events, with the most stories pegged on White House and Senate activity. While the administration was successful in framing the Act as a "quota bill," other descriptions made their way into the media, and all editorials supported the legislation.

Sources, "Quotas" and Civil Rights:

The Press and the Civil Rights Act of 1990

On Feb. 7, 1990, Senator Edward M. Kennedy introduced the Civil Rights Act of 1990 on the Senate floor. Congressional sponsors of the bill cited two main objectives for the legislation: (i) to nullify six recent Supreme Court decisions which curtailed civil rights and (ii) to expand existing laws which were not sufficient to protect against discrimination. Opponents of the legislation labeled it the "quota bill." They argued that it put unfair burdens on employers, and that it required employers to hire according to race and gender, rather than job qualifications. After months of debate on Capitol Hill (and in the media), the Act was passed in both the House (273-154) and Senate(62-34) , but later was vetoed by President Bush. The Senate failed to override the veto (66-34).

This study focuses on the relationship between news sources and news story content. The objectives of the study are: (i) to determine what news sources were used in press coverage of the Civil Rights Act of 1990; (ii) to examine how the bill was framed by the media: as a "civil rights" or "quota" bill; and (iii) to assess how news source choice may shape subsequent coverage.

A number of factors may shape news content, among them the everyday journalistic routine of newsgathering (e.g. ; Molotch & Lester, 1974; Tuchman, 1978; Fishman, 1980). It is commonly accepted that the choice of news sources influences the final product, the news story. There is still much to learn, however, about the variability amongst these sources and their impact. For example, research on news sources, while documenting the sources attributed and journalist-source relations, has exhibited a tendency to treat all official/governmental news sources as monolithic. Although it is unlikely that the views of government officials represent the full range of debate in society, there is diversity among them. As another example, researchers have largely ignored the role of minority news sources (Womack, 1989). This study provides an opportunity to assess the impact of both government officials from varied branches of government and parties and racial minorities as news sources.

The effects of media content also contribute to the significance of this study. Media content helps to shape perceptions, set agendas, and perhaps influence legislation. According to Cook (1989, p.123), "Because [the media] are selective, they necessarily focus attention on particular newsmakers and particular stories, in helping to shape national priorities." The degree to which press coverage actually influences Congress is unclear, as Hess (1986) asserts that such cause and effect is difficult to establish. Linsky (1986, p. 136), however, maintains that there is "very high potential for press impact" on Congress and further finds that liberals and conservatives are equally likely to believe that the news media have an impact on public policy. It may be for this reason that members of Congress and their staffs consume media for an average of two and one half hours per day (Hess, 1986, p.100).

In light of this potential influence, it is critical we have an understanding of the impact the media may have on recent events in the civil rights movement. Traditional definitions of news- worthiness often have resulted in media exclusion or stereotyping of minorities (Wilson & Gutierrez, 1985). Coverage of the Civil Rights Act of 1990 affords an opportunity to assess whether similar treatment of minorities occurs within a setting the media have traditionally considered newsworthy -- the legislative context. As Daniel and Allen (1988, p. 28) point out, "conceptions of the black agenda inimical to blacks' own conceptions could be advanced by policymakers without opportunity for minority rebuttal." This study, through its assessment of news sources in relation to the coverage of the Act, examines that very issue.

Literature Review

Since 1968, when the Kerner Commission documented that the news was reported primarily from a "white" perspective, a number of researchers (e.g. Wilson & Gutierrez, 1985; Martindale, 1985; Gray, 1987; van Dijk, 1988) have examined press coverage of minority groups. A general finding among these studies is that ethnic and racial minority groups tend to be under-reported. Also, coverage tends to rely on stereotypes and to slant toward "negative news," highlighting such topics as drugs and unemployment.

One study of particular relevance here is Martindale's (1986) content analysis of five newspapers in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. She found that during the '50s, civil rights coverage was 40 percent of the total coverage of black Americans, while during the '60s, civil rights constituted 69 percent of this coverage. This figure dropped to 17 percent in the '70s.

Daniel and Allen (1988) report interesting differences in the black news agenda found in "Time," "Newsweek" and National Urban League publications. Their findings for civil rights coverage are particularly applicable here :

> The Urban League put forward a black agenda which made maintaining past civil rights gains a priority, including affirmative action; alleviating poverty and its effects; and monitoring budget or other policy developments affecting civil rights or the poor. In contrast, newsmagazines drew attention to eliminating "reverse discrimination," and to espousal of the philosophy of "self-help" by the Reagan administration... (p.41).

Coverage of civil rights has been parallel in some respects to coverage of other social movements in the United States. Researchers such as Gitlin (1980) have argued that the media selectively legitimate oppositional movements, thereby maintaining consensus in society. Movements deemed threatening to the dominant order or status quo are framed as outlandish or eccentric, and certainly as illegitimate.

One reason why coverage may assume this character is that the majority of news sources are institutional, and government officials are the sources most frequently attributed in news stories (Sigal 1973; Brown et. al., 1987). Furthermore, according to Gans (1979), reporters are most likely to seek out sources who are close to them socially and culturally. It is thus of little surprise that "mainstream" views are more likely to make their way into the news. And, when examining coverage of the Civil Rights Act of 1990, it may be particularly significant that Hess (1981) found a mere 4.9 percent of Congressional reporters were black, and 16.7 percent of them women.

While government officials are the most frequently attributed news sources, not all officials are equally sought out by the media. The President remains the ultimate source, and some members of Congress are deemed more desirable as sources than are others (Miller, 1977). Hess (1986) identifies a number of factors that may determine a Senator's newsworthiness, among them committee assignments, seniority, expertise, accessibility and personality. Overall, according to Hess, the Senate is covered more extensively than the House of Representatives.

Regardless of which government official is cited, news media tend to accept and follow bureaucratic accounts of news (Molotch & Lester, 1974; Fishman, 1980). On Capitol Hill, this may mean that legislation is largely ignored by the media until its final passage because legislative debate is out of synch with everyday newsgathering: "Final passage enables the newsworthy institutional action to be reported: what Congress did, not what its subunits or its members did" (Cook, 1989, p. 51). Decisions made while at the subcommittee level may go uncovered. Hess (1981) points out, however, that this tendency to ignore some stages of the legislative process is even more true of television than of newspapers. While both types of media may focus on the same top stories, newspapers have the resources to explore additional angles.

Significantly, the public's understanding of an issue may be set by the initial news story, as subsequent stories "echo" or "rebut" the original report (Cook, 1989, p. 123). As Linsky (1986, p. 94) states, "The way the press frames the issue is as important as whether or not it gets covered at all. If the press characterizes a policy option one way early on in the decision-making process, it is very difficult for officials to turn that image around to their preferred perspective." Of course, it is frequently those same officials who have helped to determine the initial characterization.

As coverage calls attention to a problem, it also can help determine who becomes involved in the ensuing debate. Cook (1989, p. 124) suggests that being cited in the Washington Post or The New York Times may enable members of Congress to become authoritative sources and "to link media strategy and legislative strategy."

Hypotheses

Based on this review, the following hypotheses regarding coverage of the Civil Rights Act of 1990 can be stated:

H1: The occurrence of press coverage parallels bureaucratic definitions of newsworthiness.

H2: Members of civil rights groups are attributed less frequently than governmental/official sources.

H3: The news source most frequently attributed is the President, followed by senior senators.

H4: The dominant views represented in press coverage of the Civil Rights Act of 1990 are those of the President and his congressional allies.

H5: The "framing" of the Act occurs early in press coverage, and subsequent coverage follows its tone.

Methods

Press coverage of the Civil Rights Act of 1990 was examined in two publications, The Washington Post and The Atlanta Constitution. These newspapers were chosen on the basis of their readership, potential influence on this readership and access to news sources relevant to coverage of civil rights issues.

The Washington Post is widely recognized for its coverage of federal government, and was of particular interest to this study because of its role as an agenda setter -- both for Congress and other news organizations. In addition, the Post's circulation area has a 36 percent minority population, making it particularly relevant to this study. The Constitution was chosen because of Atlanta's strong links to civil rights. Atlanta historically has been a center of the United States' civil rights movement, and remains so today. Additionally, the population of the Constitution's circulation area is 30 percent minority, and the paper's readership is 21 percent African- American. The Civil Rights Act of 1990 would therefore carry much interest for the Atlanta readership. Both of these papers would be expected to cover civil rights in some capacity, although the attention and slant given that coverage may be vastly different between them.

The time frame for the study was January to December, 1990. All news stories, editorials and columns on the Civil Rights Act of 1990 listed in the index of each newspaper were included in the study. This census resulted in a total of 55 articles in The Washington Post and 19 in The Atlanta Constitution. Table 1 provides a breakdown by newspaper and story type.

News stories were coded for news story type, news source and affiliation, bill support, number of words per source, news peg, and source description of the Act. Additional descriptive information coded included location in the paper, number of paragraphs and byline. Editorials and columns were coded for their news peg and whether they supported the proposed legislation.

A pretest of the coding scheme was conducted on a random sample of 15 percent (n=12) of the articles. Reliability was tested using Holsti's formula for intercoder agreement(Budd, Thorp & Donohew, 1967), and ranged from .75 to 1.00, with a mean of .82. The .75 resulted from definitional interpretation, which was later corrected.

Results

Based on the two papers' coverage of the Civil Rights Act of 1990, it appears that they are following bureaucratic definitions of newsworthiness, as hypothesized in **H1**. As shown in Table 2, the vast majority of stories were written about the actions and reactions of Congress and the White House, accounting for 70.0 percent of total news stories. Nor is the picture much different on the editorial page: Of the editorials written, 85.7 percent focused on President Bush's veto or other White House actions. Only columns exhibit more diversity, with only 31.3 percent pegged on official occurrences.

The Atlanta Constitution showed less of a tendency to rely on bureaucratic definitions of newsworthiness than did The Washington Post. For instance, actions of civil rights groups were considered more newsworthy by the Constitution (35.7 percent of stories) than by the Post (8.3), although Congress and the White House still account for 57.1 percent of the Constitution's stories. These findings should be interpreted, however, with an eye to the fact that the Post ran nearly three times as many stories during this time than did the Constitution.

H1 is further supported by the dates when the stories were published. As shown in Figure 1, coverage peaked in October, when the bill went to the White House and was vetoed. It was also during October that the Senate failed to override the veto. Twelve stories ran during May, the second highest for any month. Again, coverage is tied to the White House. President Bush announced he would veto a "quota bill," met with black leaders to discuss his opposition to the bill, and subsequently retracted his statement regarding a veto. This sequence of events accounts for the flurry of press activity in May.

H2 predicted that members of civil rights groups would be attributed less frequently than governmental or official sources, while **H3** hypothesized that the sources most frequently sought out would be the President and senior senators. Both hypotheses are supported by the data.

As shown in Table 3, civil rights activists and groups were 20 percent of all sources cited, while White House sources (including President Bush)provided 31.3 percent of total sources. Members of the Senate account for 15.1 percent of sources attributed. Table 4 provides a breakdown of official and civil rights sources by newspaper, and shows that while the Constitution achieves more of a balance in news source type than does the Post, civil rights activists are still attributed less frequently than are governmental sources.

Partial support was found for **H4**, which predicted that the President's views would dominate news coverage. President Bush and the rest of the administration were successful in framing the bill as a quota bill. The President called the bill a quota bill 72.7 percent of the times he was attributed, while other Administration sources managed to frame the bill in this manner 40.5 percent of the time. Overall, as shown in Table 5, when sources provided descriptions they were most likely to describe the bill as a quota bill -- a finding not surprising given that the administration accounted for nearly a third of all sources.

Other views, however, also made their way into print. When news stories provided background on the bill, it most frequently was an overview of the Supreme Court decisions the bill was designed to overturn. Furthermore, of the 325 sources attributed, 155 (47.7 percent) were supportive of the legislation, while 133 (40.9 percent) were not. Editorials and columnists were also more likely to express support for the bill, thereby providing balance to the Presidential perspective.

The President's agenda did not receive favoritism in terms of the amount of space allocated, once a source was used. No significant differences (F=.485, df=3, p=.69) were found in the mean number of words attributed to Congressional ($\overline{X}$=37.6), White House ($\overline{X}$=35.4) and civil rights ($\overline{X}$=34.3) sources.

Finally, it was hypothesized **(H5)** that the "framing" of the Act would occur early in press coverage. This was so, but on a small scale. A source first framed the bill as a quota bill in February, when the legislation was introduced. It wasn't until May, though, that the term quota bill was used repeatedly (11 times) by sources in news stories. Once the terminology was in the press, it stayed there, peaking in October(28 references). Yet, as shown in Table 5, the mean number of times per story the bill was labeled a quota bill by sources increased from February to August, but dropped off in September and October.

Discussion

This study supports earlier findings that journalists tend to rely on official sources and bureaucratic definitions of news. The persons and topics deemed newsworthy remained narrowly defined. For instance, although the Civil Rights Act of 1990 had 34 sponsors in the Senate and 123 in the House, most of these voices were not heard in the press coverage. The same few powerful senators appeared in print throughout the period studied. Congressional perspectives were forced into the framework of objectivity and balance: those supporting and opposing the legislation. The multi-dimensionality of the hundreds of hours of Congressional debate (as evidenced by the Congressional Record) were lost in the press coverage, as was the valuable testimony in earlier committee hearings of "non-bureaucratic" individuals.

Furthermore, 173 civil rights and other organizations went on record as supporting the legislation. Yet few representatives of these groups were sought out by the media -- when seeking the "civil rights perspective" the same four sources were repeatedly quoted: Benjamin Hooks(NAACP), Ralph Neas(Leadership Conference on Civil Rights), Joseph Lowrey (Southern Christian Leadership Conference) and Jesse Jackson (multiple affiliations cited).

Additionally, the coverage of the Civil Rights Act of 1990 was characteristic of "horse race journalism." Much of the coverage was devoted to the debate between the White House and Congress -- whether the bill would pass and later be vetoed by the President: The race was on. Certainly, the legislative and executive branches of government are important to news coverage, but this preoccupation with official sources and activity results in a news net through which falls the "real life" impact of discrimination and how a bill such as this one would affect U.S. citizens. As Ralph Neas put it:

> Our success depends upon being able to show that this is not some arcane legal debate. You have to show what's at stake and how it impacts individuals...Very seldom does the press explain substantive issues at stake in the legislation...I think the press is attracted to adversarial situations and the political battles and they cover these issues quite well, but taking the time to explain the real issues is not something the press does well. (Mann, 1990, p. D3)

While such coverage might be expected of The Washington Post given its venue, The Atlanta Constitution did not stray far from the official viewpoint in its coverage. The percentage of sources who were representatives of civil rights groups was higher in the Constitution, but the troubling fact remains that the Constitution ran only 19 stories on the Act during the time period studied -- ten of which ran during October when the legislation was vetoed by President Bush. The Constitution's stories also averaged fewer paragraphs per story ($\bar{X}$=12.4) than did the Post's ($\bar{X}$=16.7). It seems safe to say that civil rights legislation was not a priority of the Constitution, despite its venue. This is rather surprising in a civil rights center of the United States.

While the legislation was not framed solely as a "quota bill," the administration was successful in keeping this term visible in the media. This is especially significant since over 30 amendments were made to the bill, largely to avoid such an interpretation. In fact, one such amendment explicitly stated that nothing in the legislation "shall be construed to require or to encourage an employer to adopt hiring or promotion quotas." Nonetheless, the Bush administration, and therefore the press, continued to define the legislation as a quota bill, requiring proponents of the legislation to respond within this framework.

While no content analysis can establish media effects, the implications of an agenda setting function in this context are troubling. These two newspapers provided little news to members of Congress other than their own official perspectives. The opinions of their constituents were largely neglected in both papers. Such coverage does little to keep government officials abreast of the pulse of the nation on so critical an issue. Similarly, horse race journalism based on official accounts contributes little to the electorate understanding an issue as complex as this one.

Although the press coverage studied here may not be solely from the "white" perspective found two decades ago by the Kerner Commission, neither has it reached the multi-perspectival integrated phase sought by Wilson and Gutierrez (1985). Members of minority communities are not pursued by the media in equal numbers to public officials even when they are expert sources on the topic. When it came to the Civil Rights Act of 1990, civil rights groups were given the opportunity to rebut the official viewpoint, but the agenda was not their own.

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Table 1. Article Type by Newspaper

Story Type	*Newspaper*		
	Washington Post	*Atlanta Constitution*	
News Story	37	14	(51)
Editorial	3	4	(7)
Column	15	1	(16)
	(55)	(19)	

Table 2. News Peg of News Stories

News Peg	*Percent of News Stories*
House Action	16.0
Senate Action	24.0
Presidential Veto	8.0
Other White House Action	22.0
Civil Rights Group Action/Reaction	16.0
Democratic Action/Reaction	4.0
Analysis of Legislation	6.0
Other	4.0

	100.0

(n=51)

Table 3. Percentage of Sources Attributed by Category

Source	*Percent of Total Source Attributions*
House Republican	2.8
House Democrat	5.8
Senate Republican	8.6
Senate Democrat	6.5
White House	24.3
President Bush	6.8
"Other" Republican	5.2
"Other" Democrat	4.3
Civil Rights Group	20.0
"Other" Opponents	3.4
"Other" Supporters	7.4
Unaffiliated Citizen	1.2
Anonymous Attribution	1.2
"Other"	1.2

	100.0

(n=325)

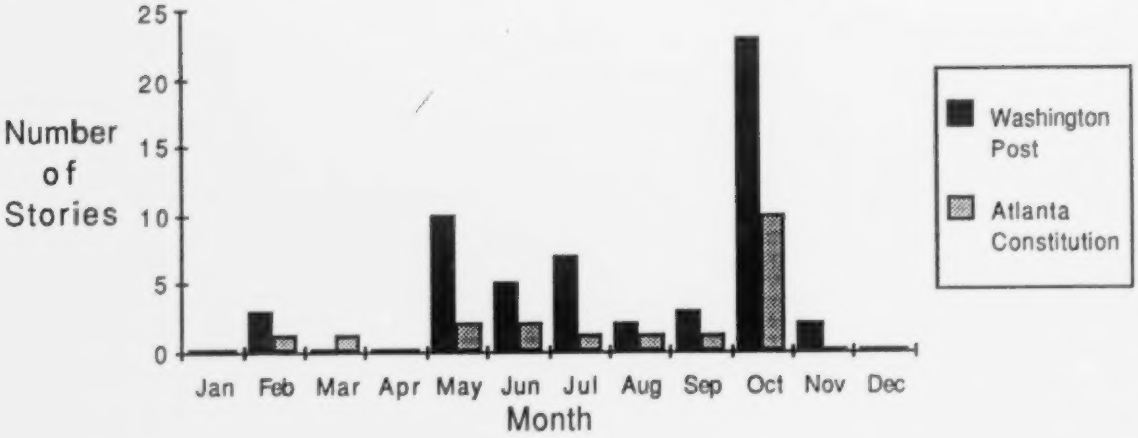
Table 4. Percentage of Official and Civil Rights Sources by Newspaper

Source	*Newspaper*	
	Washington Post	*Atlanta Constitution*
Congress	35.6	18.2
White House	43.1	36.4
Civil Rights	21.3	45.4
	100.0	100.0

Table 5. Mean Number of Source Descriptions of the Civil Rights Act of 1990 as Quota Bill or Civil Rights Bill per Story, by Month

Month	*Description*	
	Quota	*Civil Rights*
January	0.00	0.00
February	0.25	0.25
March	0.00	0.00
April	0.00	0.00
May	0.92	0.92
June	1.00	0.29
July	1.00	0.25
August	1.67	0.33
September	1.25	0.25
October	0.85	0.45
November	0.50	1.50
December	0.00	0.00

Figure 1
Number of Stories per Paper by Month



NEWS SOURCES AND NEWS CONTEXT:

THE EFFECT OF ROUTINE NEWS, CONFLICT, AND PROXIMITY

Dan Berkowitz
Assistant Professor

and

Douglas W. Beach
Graduate Student

School of Journalism and Mass Communication
University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa 52242
(319) 335-5844

Bitnet: blabrkwy@uiamvs

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at the 1991 annual convention, Boston, MA

NEWS SOURCES AND NEWS CONTEXT:
THE EFFECT OF ROUTINE NEWS, CONFLICT, AND PROXIMITY

The interaction between journalists and news sources is an important force shaping the news.[1] Journalists usually learn about events and issues through news sources, and most of the information that journalists subsequently gather about those events and issues comes from news sources. This interaction between journalists and sources is not the same for every situation, though, but is mediated by the context of the news. As the interaction changes, so does the information. To understand how news takes shape, then, it is important to understand the effect of the news environment.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the impact of two context elements--routine news and conflict news--on the mix of sources in daily newspapers and to see how their effect is mediated by the proximity of a news story to a newspaper's community. The mix of news sources will be assessed by sources' organizational affiliations and by sources' status within an organization. Data come from a content analysis of staff-written stories in three daily newspapers in Iowa.

Theoretical Background

Many studies have found that sources shape the news more strongly than do journalists. Typically, more than half of all news stories originate from sources' efforts to have their voices heard in the mass media.[2] The greatest proportion of this news is about government and draws heavily on government sources. Most of these sources, as well as those affiliated with businesses and interest groups are top executives. Lower level employees appear in the news much less frequently, as do the voices of unaffiliated sources.

This outcome does not occur by chance or by conspiracy, but by necessity. Most clearly, journalism is supposed to report on government.[3] But both journalists and news sources also face social pressures that influence their actions.[4] Because media organizations are profit-making enterprises, journalists must learn to select and gather news that will draw a large audience. At the same time, journalists must learn to do their jobs efficiently, applying strategies that virtually assure their efforts will bring back a story.[5] One of journalists' common strategies is to rely on source-originated news about planned events, events that present predictable news at an expected time through pre-arranged news sources.

News sources likewise face pressures from their organizations, their political parties, and their constituents. To address these pressures, sources often attempt to express their views and promote their causes through the mass media. Although sources sometimes see it in their best interests to avoid news coverage, they more frequently attempt to create news stories that meet journalists' news needs. Sources therefore subsidize journalists' costs of gathering and reporting information in order to increase their chances of being covered.[6]

Not all news, though, comes through what has been called "routine channels," those items originating from news releases, news conferences, preplanned events, or official proceedings.[7] Reporters do develop some stories by their own enterprise, from tips, and through private briefings with officials or business leaders. Some evidence suggests that local newspapers might do this more frequently than large national newspapers.[8] When reporters originate their own stories, they have more freedom to choose which people will be used as news sources. Non-routine channel news, then, will have a different mix of sources than routine channel news.

Conflict-related news is also likely to bring a different mix of sources.[9] In non-conflict stories, the range of views about a subject is relatively unidimensional, so that reporters can effectively cover a story through official channels. Especially at the community level, newspapers tend to support the status quo, rather than intentionally introduce controversy.[10] For controversial issues, though, more diverse voices make an attempt to be heard. Journalistic concerns for objectivity then lead journalists to try to provide information from each side of an issue. In addition, the press feels comfortable in covering this controversy, first, because the community has already acknowledged that a disparity exists, and second, because covering conflict news can benefit a media organization by drawing greater readership. In conflict news, then, the mix of news sources should differ from non-conflict situations.

The effect of different news channels and conflict news is not the same for both proximate and non-proximate stories, however. Much of journalists' activities involve routine work processes built on a regular pool of news sources.[11] Although this group of sources is composed largely of officials in government and business, journalists also become familiar with other people who can provide information for a news story. When news takes place farther away from a newspaper's core circulation area, though, the range of known, reliable sources becomes narrower, and includes a greater concentration of organizationally affiliated, official sources.[12] Further, much of non-proximate news will be learned of through routine news channels designed by sources to reach a newspaper. The result is that departures from everyday news stories should produce a greater difference in the source mix for proximate stories.

This discussion suggests three hypotheses about the effect of news context on the mix of sources appearing in the local press:

H_1: Non-routine channel news will contain a broader range of news sources than routine channel news.

H_2: Conflict-based news will contain a greater diversity of sources than non-conflict news.

H_3: The effect of these two news context variables will be greater for proximate news.

Method

Data were collected through a content analysis of three of the largest daily newspapers in Iowa. These included the Des Moines Register (daily circulation 209,765; E&P '90 population estimate 181,873), Cedar Rapids Gazette (daily circulation 70,821; E&P '90 population estimate 124,334), and the Waterloo Courier (daily circulation 49,211; E&P '90 population estimate 108,570). The same constructed week (Monday through Friday) was sampled for each paper from a two-month period.

The emphasis of this study was on staff-written news stories of at least five column inches. Wire stories and syndicated items were not coded, because those articles are developed through a different reporting process. For the same reason, only stories in news sections of the papers were coded, including local news and business sections, but excluding lifestyle sections and sports. Entire stories were coded, including any copy that jumped to another page.

Each person to whom information was attributed in a news story was considered as a news source. These people were coded for their organizational affiliation and their status within an organization. Affiliation was coded as (a) government; (b) affiliated citizen (businesses, interest groups, other organizations); and (c) unaffiliated citizens. Coding decisions were based on the role in which a person was speaking. For example, an affiliated citizen would be speaking as an employee of a business, but would be considered unaffiliated if quoted on an unrelated subject.

Several studies have coded affiliation according to a specific kind of government agency (U.S., state, local).[13] This study, however, coded all government sources into the same group. That decision was made in order to eliminate spurious variation. In particular, the largest paper had much greater statewide circulation and more state government in its metropolitan area, and an analysis controlling for proximity would be confounded by these differences.

Source *status* was adapted from coding schemes used by other studies,[14] including (a) executive (in a management or decision-making position); (b) professional (doctors, lawyers, teachers, scientists); (c) spokesperson (public relations personnel); (d) worker (secretaries, factory employees, technicians); (e) position not specified (but organization identified); and (f) unaffiliated.

Three news context variables were collected at the story unit of analysis and added to the data for each news source. *News channel*, which referred to the way a story appeared to have originated, was coded as either routine (news release, news conference, official proceeding, public meeting, preplanned event) or non-routine (enterprise reporting or based on a background briefing). *Conflict* was defined as an active dispute between two or more parties. It was coded as conflict-based if the conflict appeared within the first five paragraphs of a news story.

Finally, *proximity* was coded according to whether a story was based in a newspaper's metropolitan area. To accomplish this, area maps were photocopied from the back cover of telephone directories and a circle was drawn around essentially contiguous communities where each paper was located. Coding decisions were then made from this map, based on the site of an incident, event, or announcement.

The two authors check-coded 15 stories containing 40 sources from other issues of the newspapers used for this study. Percent coder reliability was 100% for conflict, proximity, affiliation, and status, and 93% for news channel. The second author then coded all stories in the constructed-week sample that met the criteria for inclusion. In all, 734 news sources were coded from 237 stories.

Results

The two source measures (affiliation, status) were cross-tabulated with two of the two news context variables (channel and conflict). In each case, proximity of a story was used as a control variable, so that two analyses were produced for each of the four combinations of variables. Tables 1 and 2 test the first hypothesis, concerning the effect of the news channel on the source mix. The hypothesis was supported both times by statistically significant relationships for proximate news. Table 1 found that unaffiliated sources increased for non-routine news, and affiliated sources decreased. The proportion of government sources increased slightly. In this table, the differences in statistical significance between proximate and non-proximate news might be partly related to the difference in sample sizes. For the other three tables, the two Chi-square values were much farther apart, though, so that concern would be less important.

Tables 1 and 2 about here

Table 2 shows that the proportion of executives and professionals decreased for non-routine stories. Spokespersons appeared more frequently, as did workers. Only affiliated sources were included in this analysis because differences in unaffiliated sources would affect the chi-square test, even though they were not a focus of the analysis (the proportions of the unaffiliated sources appears in Table 1). As a result, the number of sources in the analysis dropped from 734 to 658 for Table 2.

Tables 3 and 4 about here

The role of conflict stories was examined by Tables 3 and 4. Table 3 supports Hypothesis 2 and shows that, for proximate news, government sources and unaffiliated sources increased for conflict stories, while the proportion of affiliated sources decreased. This result parallels the findings in Table 1.

Table 4 produced results counter to the hypothesized direction, because the diversity of affiliated sources decreased. Here, more executives and professionals appeared in conflict stories, while spokespersons and workers decreased. This finding only appeared for proximate news, and the analysis for non-proximate news was once again not statistically significant.

Overall, these analyses found support for the first hypothesis, mixed evidence for the second hypothesis, and strong support for the third hypothesis.

Discussion and Conclusions

The most striking finding of this study was that news context produced a change in the mix of news sources, but that the change occurred only for proximate news stories. For non-proximate stories, approximately the same mix of sources appeared regardless of the news context. From the perspective of journalistic performance, this suggests that these papers were more responsive to the news that most clearly affected and interested their readers.

As the background section explained, journalists develop a more diverse pool of sources in their own communities, but can find only the most visible sources in other locations. Journalists turn to unaffiliated sources to add a human-interest angle to proximate news, but would not find that as necessary for non-proximate stories. Not all of the differences observed here should be attributed to the newspapers' journalists, however. People more familiar with a newspaper and its community might be better able to understand how to access that paper, and would therefore have a better chance of becoming a news source. The nature of proximate news also offers a partial explanation. In essence, more of the news within a paper's metro area will concern the activities of individuals and their lives, but for stories outside the metro area, official news from official sources will dominate.

Addressing the findings more specifically, this study found that diversity of the source mix increased for non-routine news, as more unaffiliated sources appeared in non-routine news. Similarly, a greater proportion of spokespersons and workers appeared. This effect is likely the result of journalists' enterprise: as they developed story ideas, they also needed to develop potential sources of information. Further, they had the _opportunity_ to develop sources. Spokespersons would be a natural point of entry for reporters.

Routine channel news, in contrast, is official news created by organizations that provides built-in news sources who are most often officials. When an organization or agency creates routine channel news, the news source is usually provided. News releases quote officials, and news conferences are conducted by officials. When information subsidy efforts are successful, then, sources have a better chance of choosing who will speak. Neither journalistic objectivity nor needs for work expediency offer much leeway for introducing other views into routine channel news.

Conflict-related news showed a similar pattern for news sources. In a way, non-conflict news is much the same as routine channel news. In non-conflict situations, news sources have more say in what will become the news and more say in which people will be voicing that news. For conflict stories, journalists feel compelled by the ideals of objectivity to search out and report on both sides. This produces a greater proportion of unaffiliated sources for conflict news.

At first, the increase in high-status affiliated sources in conflict news situations seemed surprising. After some thought, though, this outcome appears logical. From an organization's perspective, management would want only its most trusted representatives speaking about conflict news, where the organization has more at risk. Further, an organization might attempt to bolster its argument by calling on experts, such as scientists and lawyers. As Table 4 shows, the proportion of executives and professionals actually increased for conflict news. From a journalist's perspective, the ideals of objectivity might lead toward an acceptance of these official views, as reporters attempt to present the "objective facts" offered by the experts on each side.

Even though this discussion has found differences in the mix of sources related to news context, there was also a less obvious, equally striking finding. Overall, little substantive difference was found in the combined proportions of government and affiliated sources. Further, executives and professionals--both top officials in an organization--comprised the largest proportion of those organizationally-linked sources, a finding that corresponds with several other studies. The effect of this official, organizationally-linked news is that the information which people take away from their media encounters represents a relatively small range of source-defined alternatives. Here, approximately two-thirds of all the stories based in the metropolitan area originated through routine news channels.

From a critical studies perspective, this indicates that a dominant ideology of social order and social power is being reinforced.[15] Rather than occurring through an intentional conspiracy, though, this ideology is transmitted subconsciously in what appears as a natural element of society.[16] In this study, communities were covered more adequately when there was a newspaper in their metropolitan area. Communities without a newspaper would be covered through a more official view that more strongly reinforced the dominant social order.

Regardless of the actual degree of intent, this study suggests that officials have a good chance of defining news situations and limiting the range of possible alternatives, while the citizenry simply chooses sides in a predetermined debate. Although social order and social power are merely human constructions, this officially led social interaction does not allow truly alternative views to surface as readily.

# # #

Endnotes

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Table 1

Comparison of Source Affiliation and News Channel by Story Site

Affiliation	Metro area news Routine	 Nonroutine	Non-metro news Routine	 Nonroutine
Government	50.7%	55.5%	62.6%	49.2%
Affiliated	38.8	27.7	32.6	42.2
Unaffiliated	10.5	16.8	4.8	8.6
TOTAL%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
N	304	155	147	128
Sig. Chi-square	$p<.05$ χ^2=7.22 df=2		n.s. χ^2=5.38 df=2	

Table 2

Comparison of Source Status and News Channel by Story Site

Status	Metro area news Routine	 Nonroutine	Non-metro news Routine	 Nonroutine
Executive	57.4%	53.5%	54.3%	49.6%
Professional	20.2	13.2	12.1	14.5
Spokesperson	2.6	7.8	7.1	7.7
Worker	3.3	13.9	5.8	8.5
Unspecified	16.5	11.6	20.7	19.7
TOTAL%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
N	272	129	140	117
Sig. Chi-square	$p<.01$ χ^2=24.32 df=4		n.s. χ^2=1.34 df=4	

Table 3

Comparison of Source Affiliation and Conflict News by Story Site

Affiliation	Metro area news Non-conflict	 Conflict	Non-metro news Non-conflict	 Conflict
Government	49.3%	54.9%	57.4%	55.4%
Affiliated	41.4	29.5	38.2	36.0
Unaffiliated	9.3	15.6	4.4	8.6
TOTAL%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
N	215	244	136	139
Sig. Chi-square	$p<.01$ $\chi^2=8.85$ df=2		n.s. $\chi^2=2.01$ df=2	

Table 4

Comparison of Source Status and Conflict News by Story Site

Status	Metro area news Non-conflict	 Conflict	Non-metro news Non-conflict	 Conflict
Executive	52.8%	59.2%	55.4%	48.8%
Professional	14.9	20.9	11.5	14.9
Spokesperson	6.7	1.9	6.9	7.9
Worker	7.7	5.8	6.2	7.9
Unspecified	17.9	12.2	20.0	20.5
TOTAL%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
N	195	206	130	127
Sig. Chi-square	$p<.05$ $\chi^2=10.80$ df=4		n.s. $\chi^2=1.46$ df=4	

AUDIENCE RECALL OF NEWS STORIES
PRESENTED BY NEWSPAPER, COMPUTER, TELEVISION AND RADIO

by

Melvin DeFleur, Syracuse University
Lucinda Davenport, Michigan State University
Mary Cronin, Washington State University
and
Margaret DeFleur, Syracuse University

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SHORT ABSTRACT

This paper reports a large-scale experiment in which subjects were exposed to news stories presented by one of four media. The goal was to provide both base-line data and a reasonably "definitive" answer as to the relative level of recall from presentations by newspaper, computer screen, television and radio while controlling other factors. News stories presented by newspaper or computer screen were recalled at a significantly higher level among subjects tested in those conditions than the same stories presented to similar subjects via the two broadcast media.

LONG ABSTRACT

This paper reports the findings of a large-scale experiment in which 480 subjects were exposed, one-by-one and under controlled conditions, to one of three news stories presented by one of four media. The results focus on the number of details subjects could remember from the story they received, and what part each medium played in determining their level of both recall and recognition. The goal of the experiment was to provide a "definitive" answer as to the relative effectiveness of similar presentations by newspaper, computer screen, television and radio as sources for learning details of news stories. The factorial design permitted direct comparisons between these media while holding constant a number of content, audience and situational variables that can strongly influence how much people remember from exposure to a news story. The results were straightforward: News stories read in presentations via newspaper or computer screen were recalled at a significantly higher level among subjects tested in those conditions than the same stories presented to similar subjects via the two broadcast media. This held for both unaided and aided recall, and for the combination of the two. People receiving news in their day-to-day environments are influenced by a host of what we have termed factors of contextual interference that directly limit what they learn from any of the usual news media. The present experiment shows what happens if the influence of these factors are not present. In so doing, it provides a base line against which results from other strategies can be compared.

AUDIENCE RECALL OF NEWS STORIES PRESENTED BY NEWSPAPER, COMPUTER, TELEVISION AND RADIO

This paper reports the findings and implications of an experiment in which subjects were individually exposed, under highly controlled conditions, to one of three news stories presented by one of four media. The results focus on the number of details subjects could remember from the story they received, and on what part each medium played in determining their level of both recall and recognition. The experiment was conducted in order to provide a reasonably "definitive" answer to a question that has troubled researchers for several decades. That is, from which medium can audiences recall news stories best? The weight of evidence from the accumulated literature suggests that it is newspaper presentations. However, consensus on that conclusion has not been complete in the experimental literature.[1] Much depends on whether audience members attend carefully, are motivated to learn, are exposed more than once, and if there are distracting factors in the reception setting. The present experiment exercizes considerable control over such factors.

To seek a reasonably clear answer within a news context (as opposed to using other forms of content in media/learning comparisons) a large-scale experiment was conducted in which news stories were individually presented to each of 480 subjects. The four media used for the presentations were newspaper, computer, television and radio. The computer screen was included because it is now used for certain kinds of news presentations via networks and online databases. It may become a more general news channel for the public in the future. The 3 x 4 factorial design permitted comparisons between the media while holding constant a number of audience and situational variables that can influence how much people remember from exposure to a news story. The methodological significance of the experiment is that it provides base-line data for further research that can systematically vary such factors while comparing how well subjects learn from news presentations.

BACKGROUND

When members of an audience are exposed to news presentations in their home, or in other routine daily contexts, several sets of variables influence what they learn. One set is the individual differences among people that determine their level of attention, motivation and ability to recall what they read, hear or see.[2] A second set of factors determining how well people remember particular stories is the distinctive cognitive processing requirements of visual, audio and audiovisual formats provided by print and broadcast media.[3] Finally, a third set of variations comes from factors that compete for audience attention. Exposure to and learning from a news story is influenced by various contextual features that characterize the social and behavioral situation of the audience member's receiving environment. These differ greatly from one medium to the next. For example, people read newspapers under a variety of conditions. These can range from a quiet situation at home, where close and prolonged attention to a story is possible, to the buzzing confusion of a commuter train where distractions are numerous. Listening to a story presented by radio is seldom an experience in which total attention is given to the broadcast. More likely it is heard against a background of home chores, driving, or other complex activities that compete for attention. Similarly, few people view a television news story under solitary conditions with complete attention to the presentation. A study by Mark Levy revealed that only one quarter of the audience gave such presentations full attention. The majority viewed TV news in distractive settings while eating, cooking, or socializing with others --- or even while attending to other media.[4]

Collectively, we can refer to these distracting conditions of reception as factors of contextual interference. Because of their complexity and omnipresence it has proven to be difficult if not impossible for researchers studying people in "natural" settings to sort out: (1) how much people remember from a given news story, and (2) which medium serves best as a source for facts that can be recalled.[5] Both the design and subject selection features of the present experiment represent attempts to minimize the problems of individual differences among audience members and problems in the receiving environment. They do so by exerting controls over the educational level of the audience, the medium of transmission, level of story interest, and factors of contextual interference.

The general strategy of the present research was developed after a careful review of published studies aimed at understanding how well and under what conditions audiences recall what has been presented in the news by the different media. If one thing is clear it is that answers remain elusive. In fact, the literature in both basic social and behavioral science and in media studies reveals considerable debate growing out of inconsistent findings and conclusions.

Within the basic social and behavioral sciences, literally hundreds of comparative studies of learning from various visual, audio and audiovisual (non-news) sources have been conducted for over a century. For example, in 1985, Kellerman reviewed and summarized some 233 articles and books that had been published between 1950 and 1981 by researchers from various disciplines regarding source effects on memory processes. She concluded that both memory processes and media influences on them are extremely complex and that no firm generalizations were in order.[6]

If the focus is reduced to the more specific issue of media that transmit news, the situation changes --- but not much. Beginning in the 1940s, there have been numerous empirical investigations that have probed the comparative effectiveness of our common media as sources for news.[7] These studies have used either a survey, an experimental or a post-facto strategy.

The usual procedure in the survey approach to news recall is to interview, either by phone or fact-to-face, a sample of adults in the community to measure what they learned from voluntary exposure to specific news presentations. Usually, the assessments are made --- sometimes after prior alerting of subjects --- right after, or shortly after, a specific news broadcast.[8] In such studies, factors of contextual interference have made it difficult to obtain meaningful results. Indeed, a number of investigators have concluded that people learn very little from exposure to news presentations, especially from television.[9]

In the experimental approach to news recall, subjects are typically exposed to either simulated or real stories, after which what they learn is measured, either by unaided recall probes or by giving them multiple choice tests (aided recall).[10] Usually, controls are exercized over conditions of exposure and other factors than can influence recall. Findings from these studies are more consistent. Newspaper presentations of stories usually result in higher levels of recollection.[11] A problem needing control here is that newspaper accounts can be read and re-read, while broadcast presentations are one-time only. In addition, experimental studies have shown clearly that there are a number of "production factors" that can influence retention from news stories."[12]

The post-facto approach to remembering the news usually involves interviews with samples of audiences to assess how much can be recalled by light vs heavy media-users about some list of stories or issues that have been in the media during some recent period. These studies have yielded very inconsistent findings concerning which medium serves audiences best as a source for learning. Among the three approaches, this has been the one in which factors of contextual interference are the most difficult to assess or control.[13]

Overall, then, no unambiguous answers currently exist as to how the several media rank in terms of effectiveness as sources for learning information presented in news stories. The weight of evidence (from experimental studies) is that more information is retained from newspaper exposures, other things being equal. Debates remain as to whether television or radio is next.[14] No study of the computer screen as a news medium was located.

METHODOLOGY

The major features of the present study's methodology that need explanation are (1) the media employed and the characteristics of the news stories used, including how they were presented to the subjects, (2) the nature of the subjects and the rationale for their selection and assignment to the twelve conditions of the experiment, (3) the two measures used to assess the dependent variable (recall and recognition of details of the stories), (4) the controls exercised over factors of contextual interference, and (5) the statistical design used to summarize and interpret the findings.

The Media Used in the Experiment

The major focus of the experiments was to compare the four media mentioned as sources for learning factual information from news stories. While the venerable newspaper, the television set, and radio need little explanation, the computer screen is not commonly used as a news medium. However, while there has been considerable discussion of such uses for years, there is a paucity of research findings as to how well it can serve in this capacity.

For the newspaper presentation, each of the stories was printed in a column format and font characteristic of the medium. In this form, each story was an account of approximately six inches in length. For the computer versions, each story occupied 24 lines on the screen. The television versions were seen by subjects in "word-story" format. That is, a professional anchor, unknown to the subjects, presented each of the stories on screen in a normal "talking head" manner with no accompanying displays. The radio versions were heard from tapes of the TV audio tracks.

The Three Stories

Several factors were taken into account in the development of the stimulus stories used in the experiment. These were prior knowledge, proximity and importance. Prior knowledge was controlled in the sense that it was ruled out. That is, each of the accounts was a "spot" story with no history. Proximity is a well-understood "news value" that can influence audience interest and thereby recall. This was controlled by using stories that were all identified as from the local community. Finally, story importance is a critical factor in creating audience interest and thereby potentially influencing recall. This was controlled by using stories representing three distinctive levels of potential audience interest. One was a story of a residential fire that resulted from arson. Property damage was described but there was no loss of life. The second, at a somewhat higher level of interest, was a story about an auto accident in which a car went into a river, resulting in a drowning. The third, at the highest level of interest, concerned a dispute in which a man shot and killed several members of his brother's family. These stories were reviewed by three judges ---one a former editor of a major metropolitan newspaper, the second a former broadcast news director, and the third a well-known media scholar. All were in agreement as to the interest and general newsworthiness ranking of the three accounts.

In addition, the three stories were developed to be very similar in number of words and formal features. For example, the fire story contained 256 words and it ran 79 seconds in broadcast media form. The drowning story contained 256 words requiring 70 seconds in the broadcast version. Finally, the murder story had 253 words which required 79 seconds in the broadcast presentations.

Each subject in the experiment read, viewed or heard only one story. Each was told that the purpose of the experiment was to see how much he or she would be able to recall after carefully reading, viewing or listening to a news story. It was made clear that after exposure the subject would be asked to recall as many details as possible and tell what he or she could remember into a tape recorder (clearly visible). It was also indicated that a second step would be to take a brief multiple choice test over the facts of the story.

In the newspaper version subjects were shown the story on a printed page and were asked to read each sentence at their normal pace, but only once. This requirement was explained carefully to the subjects. Each was asked if they understood this instruction and if they would agree to abide by that condition. All did. In addition, during the presentation each subject was carefully observed by the experimenter to ensure compliance. No problems were encountered. The same requirements were imposed for the computer condition. For television presentations, subjects were seated before the screen and the taped story was played. They had no opportunity to view the material again. The same was true for the radio version, where the television sound track was played on audio tape.

The Subjects and Their Selection

In using an experimental strategy, random variations among subjects always pose statistical problems. From a theory-of-methods point of view it would be very helpful if all subjects could be exactly alike! This would reduce random error and make it easier to attribute differences among those "treated" in particular ways to the influences of the experimental conditions themselves. Such a strategy is in fact employed in many medical experiments where strains of "genetically pure" animals are used, thereby eliminating the influence of individual variations. The negative side of such a strategy is, of course, limitations in generalizability. The results may apply to the animals studied, but not to similar animals in the wild (to say nothing of human beings).

In designing a subject selection strategy for the present research there was no way to obtain subjects who were all alike. However, by using students in beginning courses in media studies it was possible to limit the range of variation. This also made it possible to exercise reasonable controls concerning motivation to learn and willingness to comply with the conditions required in the experiment. Therefore, the subjects who participated in the experiments were 480 students, each of whom was taking a freshman-level course in media studies, e.g. introduction to mass communication (or similar title), within one of three American universities. One was a very large midwestern state university (324 subjects). A second was a middle-sized northeastern private university (108 subjects). The third was a small private institution with religious affiliation (48 subjects). No claim is made that this procedure made the sample "representative" of American college students. However, using three quite different schools did avoid having the results from only a single type of institution.

As was suggested, the rationale for using such subjects is that it reduces potential influences on the results due to great diversity in both demographic categories such as age and level of schooling, plus individual characteristics such as intelligence, learning ability. Variations in such factors would be much wider among the general population. A major advantage is that experiments based on this subject selection strategy can establish empirically validated generalizations obtained under known conditions. These can serve as either hypotheses or base-line data that can be compared to findings from research that investigates the same issues with samples drawn from the public at large. A major disadvantage is that the degree to which the results of the present experiment can be generalized immediately to the general population is obviously limited.

The 480 subjects were randomly assigned to each of the 12 experimental conditions. This produced a total of 40 subjects in each cell (with 27, 9 and 4 from each of the universities respectively). All subjects were run one at a time by a team of trained experimenters. Each was exposed to only one story presented via one of the four media described. Each subject was carefully instructed "to pay close attention" and "to try hard to remember as many details as possible." Exposure took place in a quiet room with no one present except an experimenter. Participation in the project was a part of a course requirement. Thus, the procedures and controls were designed to reduce the influence of extraneous individual variations, distractions from factors of contextual interference and to enhance both attention to the story and subject motivation.

Measuring Unaided and Aided Recall

The dependent variable --- the degree to which subjects recalled the news stories --- was measured in two ways. Immediately after exposure, each subject was asked (with extensive probing) to repeat into a tape recorder what he or she had learned. Then, each immediately took a 24-item multiple choice test over the content of the story to which he or she had been exposed. This provided two quite difference measures of recall. The tape recorded responses represent direct or unaided recall. As will be seen, the two measures were also combined into a third index that averaged both assessments.

To obtain a score indicating direct recall, each of the details contained in a given story were identified (Fire story = 48; Drowning story = 37; Murder story = 48). Each subject's tape-recorded account of the story to which he or she was exposed was typed into hard copy.[15] These were then examined to ascertain how many of the details of that story appeared in the subject's version and how accurately the subject reported each. To do this, each detail was scored on a 0 to 3 accuracy scale, where 0 = "no facts correct"; 1 = "a few facts somewhat correct"; 2 = "most facts essentially correct" and 3 = "all facts essentially correct." Thus, a subject who was able to recall all 48 details of the fire story could have earned up to 3 x 48 = 144 points (a very unlikely outcome). For each subject a percentage score was calculated on the basis of what proportion of this possible amount they actually did earn. That percentage represented an unaided recall score for details.

However, since human judgment is involved in the above scoring process for details, two analysts were used who worked independently to determine two versions of each subject's percentage score. The two lists of the 480 scores, independently obtained, were then correlated to provide an index of reliability. (The resulting coefficient was r = .927) The two detail scores for each subject as determined by the two analysts were then averaged for each subject to obtain the final measure of unaided recall of details.

The second measure of recall was much simpler. It was a 24-item multiple choice test over the content of the story to which the subject had just been exposed. This provided a measure of aided recall.

To obtain a third measure of recall it was possible to average the above two percentage scores together for each subject. (The correlation between the two arrays was r = .456) Their average provided a combined measure of recall, to which the independent unaided and aided measures contributed equally. These three measures made separate analyses possible to see if there were significant variations in the findings that could be attributed to different ways of assessing recall.

FINDINGS

The results from all three universities were combined so that they could be analyzed within ANOVA statistical designs and a series of t-tests. (Using three universities was a control and not a focus of hypothesis testing.) The first step was to calculate the mean scores for each of the three measures of recall for each of the four media. These resulting means are based on a combination of the results over all stories. (Using three stories was also a control and it was not done as a basis for hypothesis testing.) The means for each medium by recall measure are shown in Table 1:

[Table 1 about here]

These findings show very consistent patterns: The newspaper presentations were remembered best. That remains true regardless of which of the three measures of recall is considered. Next best recalled were presentations via the computer screen, followed by television and then by radio in that order. Again, the findings were consistent for all three measures of the dependent variable.

However, while the means shown in Table 1 reveal clear and consistent patterns, a major question concerns the significance of the differences across rows --- that is, differences in level of recall of the stories between the four media. To understand this, a series of statistical analyses was performed. The data were separated in terms of the three measures of recall and a separate 3 x 4 factorial ANOVA was calculated for each. The findings from these analyses are provided in (the upper halves) of Tables 2, 3, and 4.

[Tables 2,3 and 4 about here]

As can be seen, the results are again clear and consistent. The F-value for "media" in each of the three tables is highly significant. What these ANOVA's reveal is that the means for the media vary to a degree considerably beyond chance around their general mean. Thus, the hypothesis that there are no differences between the media presentations can be rejected for all three measures of recall.

What the ANOVA's do not reveal is the significance of differences between the media on a pair-by-pair basis. In order to identify whether each medium differed significantly from each other one, t-tests were calculated between each of the possible pairs within rows in each of three tables. The results of these tests are shown in the lower half of each table separately. Once again, clear and consistent results are in evidence: In each table, the t-test analyses reveal the same pattern: the means for newspaper vs the computer screen presentations did not differ significantly. The same was true of television vs radio presentations. However, for all three measures of recall, significant differences were found between the print media and the broadcast media. Stories presented via print were recalled at a significantly higher level than the same stories presented via either television or radio.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The results of this large-scale experiment are straightforward and unambiguous: News stories read in presentations via newspaper or computer screen were recalled at a significantly higher level among the 240 subjects tested in those conditions than the same stories presented to 240 similar subjects via the two broadcast media. This held for both unaided and aided recall, and for the combination of the two. While there have been debates about the importance of the difference between these two types of recall, it seemed to make no difference in the present experiment --- even though they were not highly correlated.

The finding that stories presented by newspaper were recalled better than by either television or radio was not particularly surprising, but it has significant implications: Given the weight of evidence from prior experiments, plus the very large number of subjects involved in the present study (and the numerous controls in the design), it can be suggested that the superiority of newspapers as a medium from which people can recall details (ceterus paribus) would now be difficult to challenge. Thus, further experimental media comparisons on this issue would probably yield data of only confirming value.

What was somewhat surprising, to the experimenters at least, was the finding that the results from computer screen presentations were not significantly different from those of the newspaper. It may seem that it should have been anticipated insofar as both are print media requiring a quite similar cognitive processing unlike that of the audiovisual or audio-only versions related to television and radio. One reason that the finding was not anticipated is that many people are not accustomed to using computers and it was felt nervousness might interfere with learning. The second is that while both print media appear to be similar because they require reading, there may be differences between them in terms of human perception that are as yet not well understood.

The influence of unfamiliarity with computers can be demonstrated by data obtained from a cross-cultural extension of the present experiment (serving as a base-line) that was completed in Spain.[16] The study used exactly the same experimental design and stories (translated carefully into Spanish) as in the present experiment. The 240 subjects were communication students from a large Spanish university --- closely comparable to those who participated in the present experiment. While in an overall sense there was no significant difference in the amount of learning between the two cultural groups when averaging over all media, the computer was the least effective among the Spanish subjects. They learned best from newspaper presentations --- followed by radio, television and the computer in that order! Since computer use is far less among these subjects than among their American counterparts, this presumably inhibited learning from that source. Thus, just because two media require reading of print, it does not mean that responses to them will be the same.

Today's American students, and especially those in communication sequences, where word-processing is common, are now relatively comfortable with computers. Indeed, that seemed to be the case among most of the present subjects. That degree of familiarity may not yet be shared by the general public, but the results imply that the computer screen does have potential as an effective medium for presenting news, at least in terms of recall of story content.

Also somewhat surprising was the finding that there were no significant differences between radio and television in the present experiment. Much has been written about television as a news medium, and it is very clear that for many years it has been the preferred source for large segments of the population.[17] If the present type of experiment has validity, however, it is not significantly better than radio as a medium from which to learn the content of news stories, and it does far worse than either the newspaper or even the computer screen, at least for the kinds of subjects studied in the present experiment.

Do the results of this experiment apply to populations other than those studied, or outside the controlled conditions used here? Probably not, and it is not necessary to belabor the issue. However, the research community has found it difficult if not impossible to sort out the questions posed in the present study by using either a survey approach or post-facto strategies. People receiving news in their day-to-day environments are influenced by a host of what we have termed factors of contextual interference that directly limit what they learn from any of the usual news media. The present experiment does show what happens if the influence of these factors are not present. In so doing, it provides base line findings against which results from other populations and other research strategies can be compared. Further research can systematically vary subject type, story content, conditions of exposure and so forth. Only by such careful step-by-step procedures can trustworthy knowledge about recall of the news be developed using an experimental approach.

Finally, important questions are left unanswered by the present experiment. For example, what is the relationship between recall of stories and comprehension of those stories? While it seems possible to comprehend a story at the time of exposure and then promptly forget it, is it possible to remember with only limited comprehension? These questions need further study.

A related issue is whether exposure via print always leads to higher comprehension, or merely to better recall? Conceptual sharpening of these two variables and the improvement of independent techniques for their measurement, now need to be undertaken. For one thing, research on the distinction between the two may help clarify the dilemma that many researchers find concerning exposure to television news. That is, TV has clearly become the most *popular* source for exposure to news stories, while research shows that such content is not well remembered. However, it is not clear whether television provides more or less understanding or *comprehension* of news stories during actual exposure, regardless of whether they are remembered later or not. If that is indeed the case, continuing research efforts are needed to identify how news stories can be presented on television so as to maximize both comprehension and recall without sacrificing the interest factors that lead people to turn to the medium for news in the first place.

NOTES

1.For example, the following experimental studies concluded that media other than print provided for equal or better recall of stories: John Stauffer, Richard Frost and William Rybolt, "Recall and Learning from Broadcast News: Is Print Better?" Journal of Broadcasting, 25:253-262 (1981); D. C. Williams, J. Paul and J. C. Ogilvie, "Mass Media, Learning and Retention," Canadian Journal of Psychology, 11:157-163 (1957); and Karen Browne, "Comparison of Factual Recall from Film and Print Stimuli," Journalism Quarterly, 55:351-353 (1978).

2. Seminal sources for the study of individual and demographic factors on learning from the news are: P. J. Tichenor, G. A. Donohue and C. N. Olien, "Mass Media Flow and Differential Growth of Knowledge," Public Opinion Quarterly, 34:159-170 (1970)., and J. P. Robinson, "World Affairs Information and Mass Media Exposure,"Journalism Quarterly, 44:23-40 (1967).

3.This issue has been extensively studied, but almost exclusively in comparisons between newspapers and television as news sources. For a review of relevant literature, see: W. Gill Woodall, "Information Processing Theory and Television News," in John P. Robinson and Mark R. Levy, The Main Source: Learning From Television News (Beverly Hills, Cal. :Sage Publications, 1986), pp. 133-158. Also, Barrie Gunter, "Locating the Sources of Bad Reception: A Cognitive Research Perspective," Poor Reception: Misunderstanding and Forgetting Broadcast News (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1987), pp. 53-81.

4.Mark R. Levy, "The Audience Experience With Television News," Journalism Monographs, 55:1-29 (1978).

5.For a review of such issues, see: Barrie Gunter, 1987, op.cit., pp. 20-23.

6.Kathy Kellerman, "Memory Processes in Media Effects," Communication Research, 12: 83-131 (January, 1985).

7. Examples from various periods are: Thomas W. Harrell, Donald E. Brown, and Wilbur Schramm, "Memory in Radio News Listening," Journal of Applied Psychology, 33, 1949, pp. 265-274; D.C. Williams, J. Paul and J.C. Ogilvie, "Mass Media, learning, and Retention," Canadian Journal of Psychology, 11:157-163 (1957); C. Edward Wilson, The Effect of Medium on Loss of Information, Journalism Quarterly, 51:111-115; Allan Booth, "The Recall of News Items," Public Opinion Quarterly, 34:604-610 (1970-71).

8. Elihu Katz, Hanna Adoni, and Pina Parness, "Remembering the News: What the Picture Adds to Recall, "Journalism Quarterly, 54, Summer, 1977, pp. 231-239.

9. For example, researchers have frequently reported that audiences could recall only a limited amount of information, or none at all, after viewing an evening television news program. See, for example: W. R. Neuman, "Patterns of Recall Among Television Viewer," *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 40:115-123 (1976), and Olle Findahl and Brigitte Hoijer, "Some Characteristics of News Memory and Comprehension," *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 29 : 379-296 (Fall, 1985).

10. Robert M. Bernard and Gary O. Coldevin, "Effects of Recap Strategies on Television News Recall and Retention," *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 29, 1985, pp. 407-419; Larry L. Burris, "How Anchors, Reporters and Newsmakers Affect Recall and Evaluation of Stories," *Journalism Quarterly*, 64, 1987, pp. 514-519, 532; Olle Findahl and Brigitte Hoijer, 1985, *op*. *cit*., pp. 379 - 396.

11. C. Edward Wilson, 1974, *op*. *cit*., 111 - 115.

12. There is an extensive list of such factors and they differ among the various media. For example newspaper stories can be written in an inverted pyramid or narrative style; television news stories can be produced in a variety of formats (word story, VOT, stand-ups, etc), and radio stories can include live interviews or other audio features. See: Barrie Gunter and Brian Clifford, "Remembering Broadcast News: The Implications of Experimental Research for Production Techniques," *Human Learning*, 1:13-29 (1982).

13. Examples are: Robert D. McClure and Thomas E. Patterson, "Print vs Network News," *Journal of Communication*, 26, 1976, pp. 23-28; Alan Booth, "The Recall of News Items," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 34, 1970-1971, pp. 604-610. Barrie Gunter, "News Sources and News Awareness: A British Survey," *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 29, 1985, pp. 397-406. Robert D. McClure and Thomas E. Patterson, "Print vs Network News," *Journal of Communication*, 26, Spring, 1976, pp. 23-28.

14. Adrian Furnham and Barrie Gunter, "Effects of Time of Day and Medium of Presentation on Immediate Recall of Violent and Non-violent News," *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 1, 1987, pp. 255 - 262; Barrie Gunter, Adrian Furnham, and Gillian Gietson, "Memory for the News as a Function of the Channel of Communication," *Human Learning*, 3, 265 - 271.

15. The authors are grateful to Miriam Roth Helf for the preparation and meticulous checking of these 480 protocols, and for assisting with the preparation of the statistical data.

16. Luis Buceta Facoro and Melvin L. DeFleur, "A Cross-Cultural Experiment on How Well Audiences Remember News Stories from Newspaper, Computer, Television and radio Sources," unpublished article to be submitted to a journal.

17. R. C. Adams, Newspapers and Television as News Information Media," *Journalism Quarterly*, 58: 627-629.

Table 1

MEAN SCORES OF THE THREE RECALL MEASURES WITH ALL THREE STORIES AND THE THREE UNIVERSITIES COMBINED

	MEDIUM:			
RECALL MEASURE:	Newspaper	Computer	Television	Radio
Details (unaided recall)	31.02%	29.70%	27.57%	25.88%
Test (aided recall)	79.12	79.00	74.82	74.12
Combined (average of above)	55.07	54.40	51.20	50.50

Total number of subjects = 480

Table 2

ANOVA OF UNAIDED RECALL (OF DETAILS) AND T-TESTS BETWEEN MEDIA WITH THE THREE UNIVERSITIES COMBINED

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

Source of Variation	**df**	**Sum of Squares**	**F-Value**	**P-Value**
Stories	2	2542.774	11.04	0.0001
Media	3	1861.839	5.39	0.0012
Story x Medium	6	2886.514	4.18	0.0004
Error	468			

T-TESTS BETWEEN PAIRS OF MEDIA

	Computer	Television	Radio
Newspaper	t = 0.824	t = 2.451*	t = 3.697**
Computer		t = 1.412	t = 2.593**
Television			t = 1.334

*significant at the p = .05 level or beyond.
**significant at the p = .01 level or beyond.

Table 3

ANOVA OF AIDED RECALL (TEST SCORES) AND T-TESTS BETWEEN MEDIA

WITH THE THREE UNIVERSITIES COMBINED

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

Source of Variation	**df**	**Sum of Squares**	**F-Value**	**P-Value**
Stories	2	13548.745	49.18	0.0001
Media	3	2111.496	4.87	0.0024
Story x Medium	6	5611.961	6.97	0.0001
Error	468			

T-TESTS BETWEEN PAIRS OF MEDIA

	Computer	Television	Radio
Newspaper	t = 0.735	t = 2.464*	t = 2.453*
Computer		t = 2.336*	t = 2.312*
Television			t = 0.164

*significant at the p = .05 level or beyond.
**significant at the p = .01 level or beyond.

Table 4

ANOVA OF AVERAGED RECALL MEASURES (TEST SCORES AND DETAILS) WITH THE THREE UNIVERSITIES COMBINED

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

Source of Variation	df	Mean Square	F-Value	P-Value
Stories	2	3819.479	20.42	0.0001
Media	3	1849.795	6.59	0.0002
Story x Medium	6	3798.476	6.77	0.0001
Error	468			

T-TESTS BETWEEN PAIRS OF MEDIA

	Computer	Television	Radio
Newspaper	t = 0.516	t = 2.877**	t = 3.567**
Computer		t = 2.256*	t = 2.383*
Television			t = 0.538

*significant at the p = .05 level or beyond.
**significant at the p = .01 level or beyond.

MASS MEDIA SALARY AND STATUS SURVEYS FAIL TO REFLECT MAGAZINE RESEARCH THROUGH 1989

by

Sammye Johnson
Professor
Department of Communication
Trinity University
715 Stadium Drive
San Antonio, Texas 78212
(512) 736-8157

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MASS MEDIA SALARY AND STATUS SURVEYS FAIL TO REFLECT MAGAZINE RESEARCH THROUGH 1989

BACKGROUND

The most recent study of women, men and their position, power and prestige in the media was the topic of a national conference in the spring of 1989. Appropriately if unimaginatively titled "Women, Men and Media," the conference "put back on the nation's agenda two important issues: How women are covered by the media; how women are hired and promoted in the media."(1) Though the results of various studies presented at the conference were impressive and even noteworthy, they were ultimately disappointing. Nothing was mentioned about the magazine industry as one of those mediums involved in the placement and promotion of significant numbers of men and women.

Revolving around Jean Gaddy Wilson's massive five-year study of women in the media, "Taking Stock: Women in the Media Before the 21st Century," the 1989 conference centered on hiring and promotion trends at U.S. daily newspapers, television stations, and radio stations. It's as if magazines, a part of the American media experience since 1741 (predating television and radio by centuries), did not exist.(2)

Information from the "Women, Men and Media" conference filled newspapers and professional journals.(3) Over and over again, salary survey material was cited, pointing out that sex is a major determining factor in an employee's salary: "Being male equals a higher salary. Being female equals a lower salary."(4) Thus, when it came to the nation's media, the pay gap equalled a power gap in this "first study ever comparing all news media employment."(5) Yet no one thought to ask where was salary survey material on the magazine industry? And did the magazine medium, which has a strong news and information base, feature the same patterns as newspapers, television stations and radio stations?

Mass media textbooks give magazines an equal position in their discussion of the communications industry, generally putting newspaper, television, radio and magazine in one category, with public relations and advertising occupying another category. Yet when it comes to professional, institutional information and research about salaries, especially for entry level positions and for comparative gender studies, the magazine industry falls behind.

For example, starting salaries at newspapers have long been a matter of record, primarily due to the annual survey of journalism and mass communication graduates conducted by the Dow Jones Newspaper Fund. However, when the results of the survey are reported, magazine starting salaries are not to be found. The 1988 Dow Jones Newspaper Fund survey conducted by Ohio State University cites salaries at daily newspapers, as well as broadcasting, advertising agencies, and public relations starting figures.(6) Other newspaper groups take an active role in salary surveys of its workers. The American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) regularly polls its members for information on salary and status of men and women working at newspapers, and the American Newspaper Publishers Association (ANPA) includes data in its presstime journal.

The Gannett Foundation provided funding for the Wilson "pay and power gap" survey, which accounts for its inclusion of newspapers, but doesn't explain why television and radio were added but not magazines.

American Women in Radio and Television (AWRT) surveys its members regularly and publishes results in RTNDA Communicator.

Adweek has surveyed the progress of women in advertising and marketing since 1983, providing salary information as well as detailed data on status and benefits. The International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) annually surveys its members for salary and status information, as does the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), publishing the results in their respective journals (Communication World and Public Relations Journal). Indeed, surveys of the public relations field date back to 1964, as a result of annual surveys by pr reporter.

Yet even the most recent salary surveys by professional organizations, including references to the print media, reveal magazines as out of the research loop.

The 1989-90 Women in Communications, Inc. (WICI) job and salary survey lumps cable, film, magazine, newspaper, photography, radio and television into the "media category"--effectively negating the value of its data. No information is provided as to the numbers of women in each industry, and job titles (reporter/writer; assistant editor/department/section head; editor-in-chief/ME) are not defined. All we learn is that "reporters/writers working in print or broadcasting can expect to begin their careers with a salary less than $20,000. A substantial number of them may find their salary range remains rather low throughout their career; even those with more than 10 years in the field report a salary mode of $30-35,000."(7)

Maurine Beasley, who discussed the future of journalism education in The Chronicle of Higher Education as recently as May of 1990, cited every medium but magazines in her account of the journalism job market for graduates today.(8) Yet Beasley defined journalism as newspapers, wire services, broadcasting, public relations, advertising, newsletters and magazines in her University of Maryland study of College of Journalism graduates; however, in the discussion of employment history, no salary data is provided for magazine graduates because cases were "too few to report."(9) The preponderance of data dealt with newspaper, radio and television positions.

When "journalism" jobs are mentioned, the assumption seems to be that these are positions primarily at newspapers, radio and television stations, and may occasionally include advertising and public relations slots. References to magazine positions are virtually nonexistent in professional reports, surveys, and accounts of mass media activities.

Why are there no references to the magazine industry when salary and status information for the media are offered? Is there a paucity of salary surveys in the magazine field? Is there any job data available for the magazine researcher to consider?

CONSUMER MAGAZINE INDUSTRY SURVEYS

While numerous studies have been made of magazine content, advertising and readers, there's a paucity of institutional research on the structure of the industry and the roles of those employed at consumer magazines.

One reason for this is that "the recent history of the magazine business indicates this is a very volatile industry, one that is extremely susceptible to social change as well as to economic fluctuations."(10) The numbers of magazines fluctuate significantly from year to year, as do the jobs and people employed. Unfortunately, there is no consistency in job title or position description in the magazine industry, which makes salary surveys difficult. An editor at one magazine may have the responsibilities of an associate editor at another; a circulation manager at one publication may be a circulation marketing director at another. While all magazines need four kinds of personnel--editorial, advertising sales, circulation, and production--this doesn't mean that every magazine has four departments; they may not even have four employees working on the magazine.(11)

Early consumer magazine studies primarily counted names on magazine mastheads to determine positions held by men and women. While studies of editorial mastheads in 1970 revealed that men held more of the top positions than women, other research showed great variations among individual magazines.(12) For example, a 1974 analysis of 18 well-known magazines found 70 percent of the editors at Redbook were women, while just 25 percent of the top editors at Ladies' Home Journal were women.(13)

A study of magazine editors listed in The Working Press of the Nation in 1973 found "that 11 percent are women, while 74 percent have men's first names, 13 percent give initials in lieu of a first name, and 2 percent have names used for both sexes. Women were most likely to edit technical magazines that have small circulations. Men edit the well-known women's and news magazines. Only 1 of the 25 listed news magazines was edited by a woman."(14) Research conducted at Stanford University in 1977 examined the numbers of women and men on the editorial staffs of business, news, analytic, women's, and popular magazines; across all types of magazines, 73 percent of the major editorships were held by men.(15) Yet, other research has found as many as 100 percent of articles in a single issue were written by women.(16)

More recent data relating to magazine employment is not available. A thorough, systematic analysis of those working at consumer magazines--male or female--has not been made. Except for David H. Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit's inclusion of news magazine (Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News & World Report) writers and editors in their major study of American journalists, there has not been a complete look at who works at consumer magazines.(17) Weaver and Wilhoit estimated that news magazine journalists made up only 1.1 percent of the full-time editorial workforce in the U.S. news media.(18)

Weaver and Wilhoit had just a few comments about news magazine journalists: women make up 31.7 percent of news magazine staffs, up a tad from the 30.4 percent reported by Johnstone, et al. in 1971.(19) Minorities are less likely to be attracted to news magazines than to broadcast media or daily newspaper positions.(20) The news magazine journalist is, like the rest of the editorial workforce surveyed by Weaver and Wilhoit, a white Protestant male.(21) However, the news magazine journalist has a much higher media income than the "typical" journalist, at $34,750 to $19,000.(22) News magazine journalists, who comprise the most highly paid group in the news media, also have higher job satisfaction.(23)

It's not surprising that when Weaver and Wilhoit are cited in professional or scholarly articles, references to magazine writers and editors are seldom made. The thrust of their book is those U.S. journalists working for daily and weekly newspapers, news services, and radio and television stations, where current news is emphasized. This is not the primary thrust of consumer magazines; most consumer magazines, which are published monthly, present information, features, and analysis of trends--not fast-breaking news.

A review of Journalism Quarterly (1923 to date) and of the past five years of papers presented at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) annual convention revealed numerous salary and status surveys and reports dealing with newspapers, radio and television stations, advertising agencies and public relations firms. But no independent scholarly research could be found dealing with salary and status in the consumer magazine industry.

Salary surveys conducted by the Magazine Publishers of America are confidential to members only, unlike other communications organizations which publish their results in trade and professional journals. Consumer magazine researchers are thus denied important data.

Folio: The Magazine for Magazine Management has conducted its own salary surveys for various top management positions in the consumer magazine industry since 1982, including editorial, circulation, advertising sales, and production. However, there does not appear to be any continuous survey of lower echelon editorial staff such as assistant editors or editorial assistants, or of staff writers. There are serious problems with the Folio surveys, which will be discussed in detail below. However, Folio provides the only easily accessible data relating to magazine industry pay because it surveys both consumer and business/trade editors. The results of each are discussed below, beginning with the consumer magazine results. Information on business/trade magazines begins on page 13.

Folio's first survey of editors, published in 1982, asked 1,014 publishers what their consumer and business magazines paid all rankings of editors, as well as copy editors/proofreaders and art directors during 1981. The response rate was 40.5 percent, or 410 surveys returned. The Folio report stated: "There has been very little published research in this area, although there has been a lot of informal asking around about what other magazines do."(24)

At this time, Folio pointed out several problems involved in doing such a salary survey, problems which exist to this day:

> Survey results indicate the salary question is complex since many variables are involved. Management and editors of all rankings interested in these findings should use the data cautiously. Average salaries cannot be applied without adjustments made for region, total magazine revenue, the number of editorial pages produced (particularly for chief editors and art directors, who have total responsibility), and special factors at each magazine.(25)

Those factors included frequency of publication, total circulation, and number of full-time employees. To sum up, there were simply too many variables for Folio to consider.

Although not commented on in the survey, lack of consistent editorial ranking or title designations made the field harder to compare and quantify. But the major shortcoming was this survey's failure to separate men's and women's salaries. Folio would make numerous changes in its next editorial salary survey, done three years later.

Folio's 1985 survey went directly to each editor to report anonymously on his or her salary and title (rather than a ranking). And salary by gender was analyzed. The result: "wide variations in salaries for people with same title; lower pay for women; general dissatisfaction with editorial compensation."(26)

The 1985 findings were based on responses from 484 people (53 percent response rate) in six positions: editorial management, editors, managing/executive editors, senior/associate editors, copy editors and art directors.(27) The average salary for consumer magazine editorial management (which included editorial director, vice president-editorial, editor-in-chief, and editor-publisher) was

$47,633.(28) This time Folio broke out salary averages by nine variables: region, type of magazine, average editorial pages produced annually, number of editors on the staff, frequency, circulation, gender, number of magazines responsible for, and years of experience.(29)

When the average consumer magazine salary for editorial management was indicated by gender, women's compensation was 68 percent that of men ($35,800 versus $52,350), or $16,550 less. And the same pattern of less money paid to women existed among editors, managing/executive editors, senior/associate editors, copy editors, and art directors, although the discrepancy wasn't as great. For example, women with the title of editor earned 81 percent of what men with the same title received ($28,560 versus $35,120).(30)

Folio cautioned readers about using its numbers, something one doesn't expect in a well-designed research project. Folio wrote:

> It should be noted that the data here have been presented in the form of simple totals (only one variable was studied at a time). The interaction that may exist between the totals has not been examined. For example, regarding salaries by region, it appears that editors working in the Northeast are paid higher salaries. But were there more males in the Northeast? Higher circulations? Editors with more experience? We have not shown interaction with more than one variable involved. Caution must also be used if the reader intends to use these salary and bonus figures to determine what people should be paid. Clearly, this survey reveals only what people are paid. When it comes to salary differences between men and women, for example, no one would argue that a woman with the same title as a man should be paid less.(31)

Folio's next editorial salary survey in 1986 showed women continuing to receive less money than men in every level except copy editor. Male editors earned $14,204 more than females ($57,000 to $42,796), the greatest difference in the categories.(32) The average annual salary for a woman holding the editor and publisher title, editor-in-chief, editorial director, or other top managerial title, was $80,208, or 94 percent of a man's earnings in that position. Of course, there were fewer female respondents here, 12, than males, 28.(33)

This might have been important data, but the sample universe was changed from 1985 to 1986. Instead of using the nth-name sample again, the 1986 survey featured professionals working at "Folio:400" publications (the magazine's annual ranking of the top revenue producing magazines). Consequently, "because of the difference in universe studied, editorial and design salaries revealed in this survey cannot be compared to the salaries published last year."(34)

In 1987, Folio reported: "Although there are considerable differences between the average salaries of men and women holding the positions of editor and art director, the sexes have achieved parity in the editorial management and managing editor categories."(35) Unfortunately, this parity could not be considered a significantly achievement. Although the same nine variables were used--region, type of magazine, average yearly number of editorial pages, number of editors on the staff, frequency, circulation, number of magazines responsible for, years of experience, and gender--Folio changed its sample base again. This time Folio eliminated the previous requirement that a fixed percentage of the sample be drawn from magazines with total revenues of $5 million or more. Therefore, the survey could not be compared to the 1986 one or to any other previous surveys.(36)

Folio's 1988 survey, of 559 editorial professionals (53 percent response rate), found that women continued to earn less than their male peers, from a low of 74 percent of men's salaries for editorial management to a high of 99 percent for managing editors.(37) Yet once again, no comparison could be made between the 1988 figures and earlier surveys. Folio cautioned, "Those who responded to this survey may well come from a different mix of magazines--especially related to size--than respondents to prior surveys. Comparisons are thus best made not on the broad averages, but on the more detailed breakdowns by magazine size, respondents' experience, and the like."(38) Yet to compare "detailed breakdowns" becomes a moot issue when the sample is changing over time.

Folio's 1989 annual survey, of 646 editorial professionals (47 percent response rate) in 1989, revealed that "salaries of women in this sample are frequently much closer to those of their male counterparts than they were last year....This is perhaps another indication that, on a long-term basis, the pay disparity between men and women in editorial is gradually eroding."(39) Yet once again, year-to-year comparisons of the data is not possible because of Folio's reliance on a different mix of magazines and demographics from prior years.

Folio has also surveyed consumer magazine professionals in circulation, advertising sales, and production. Each year, and in each category, men were more highly paid than women, possibly reflecting a gender gap similar to that found in editorial.(40) Unfortunately, the same problems with samples occur in these surveys, hence the "possibly" qualification.

To summarize, a continuing problem with Folio surveys is its changing sample; no consistency exists from year to year for a longitudinal analysis. Consequently, it's impossible for magazine researchers to use Folio data as accurate predictors of salary perimeters. Only the broadest generalizations can be made from the Folio data: that women tend to earn less than men; that editors in the Northeast make more than editors elsewhere in the United States; that salary increases with more years of experience; that editors at large circulation magazines (more than 100,000) make more than those at lesser circulations; that editors of bigger books (in terms of number of pages) are paid more than those at smaller books.

Other salary data occasionally can be found in sources such as Media Industry Newsletter, The Gallagher Report, The American Almanac of Jobs and Salaries, and Magazine Week.(41) Information is not gender specific and varies considerably. Data isn't available on a consistent, longitudinal basis. But job categories not surveyed by Folio sometimes can be found there, such as editorial assistant, assistant editor, paper purchasing manager, staff writer, and executive assistant. In general, salaries for these entry level positions are not disseminated or used in mass media reports. Additionally, none of these sources indicate race, another variable that should be considered in studying employment patterns in the magazine industry.

Newspaper Guild reports offer limited consumer magazine salary data, on magazines that have union contracts. These include Consumer Reports, Macleans, Newsweek, Scholastic, Scientific American, Nation, Globe International, and Time Inc. publications. Unfortunately, the information is so narrow that it is of little use to a magazine researcher. For example, a senior editor at Consumer Reports receives a minimum weekly salary of $1,101.15 after five years.(42) And a general editor at Newsweek makes $825 flat.(43) No data is provided for senior editors or for general editors at each magazine listed. And without job definitions, it's impossible to know what are the responsibilities or backgrounds required for these editorial positions.

SALARY SURVEYS OF BUSINESS/TRADE MAGAZINES

Concurrent with the consumer magazine surveys, Folio examined the pay scales of those working on business magazines, generally surveying equal numbers of business and consumer magazine professionals. A brief overview of the results follows; the same problems in universe and consistency exist for those researchers wanting to study Folio data about business and trade magazines.

In its first business magazine survey published in 1982, Folio pointed out that "whether a magazine is a consumer magazine or a business magazine is not an important factor, on average. But among the highest-paid editors (the top third), consumer magazine editors do better."(44)

The 1985 Folio business magazine survey pointed out that "readers should keep in mind that titles do not always reflect relative positions accurately. For example, in some instances, executive editor may be above the editor on the masthead. In other instances, that title might be below the editor on the masthead....There are wide variations in salaries paid within the same title group."(45) But this time, "Folio: could not spot a meaningful difference in the salaries of consumer and business personnel in our six groups. Editorial management working on consumer magazines reported slightly higher salaries than their business counterparts (an average of $47,633 versus $43,988) as did consumer magazine art directors and senior and associate editors."(46) However, business editors and managing editors made slightly higher salaries than consumer ones.

At business magazines in 1985, women earned less than their male peers (except in the copy editor category), with an even greater gap in salaries by gender than was found at consumer magazines. For example, in the senior/associate editor category, female business editors earned just 74 percent of what male business editors made, while women in this position at consumer magazines earned 95 percent of men's salaries.(47)

The 1986 Folio report still showed female business editors making less money than males in all categories except copy editor, where women earned almost $3,000 more. However, men earned as much as $22,000 more than women in those other positions.(48)

In 1987 Folio reported that on business magazines, men continued to earn more than women at all levels, and that those on consumer titles earned more than those working at business magazines. Additionally, "Although the difference in salaries between the two types of magazines is small for men--with business magazine men outearning their consumer colleagues by 9.6 percent--women managers on consumer magazines, at an average salary of 75,633, make 61.2 percent more than their sisters on business magazines."(49)

Analysis of the 1988 Folio survey revealed that for this year, business magazine people made more than their consumer magazine counterparts, although across the board, women pulled in fewer dollars than men. "Women continue to earn less than their male counterparts--from a low of 66 percent of men's salaries for editorial management to a high of 88 percent for managing editors. And in every category, the difference in pay is larger on business magazines than on consumer magazines."(50) This time, Folio commented on its survey variables relating to women editors at business magazines: "Because this survey can examine only one variable at a time, it is not possible to determine to what extent, if any, this outcome is a result of factors other than sex--for example, the size or frequency of the magazines female respondents work on or the length of time they have worked in editorial."(51)

Folio's 1989 survey of editorial salaries put the average consumer magazine payment for all respondents ahead of that for business magazines in all categories except for that of editor.(52) The sharpest gender difference between business and consumer publications is in the category of editorial manager. "On business magazines, male editorial managers earn 18 percent more than women, whereas on consumer magazines, women are 17 percent ahead."(53)

The same basic patterns hold true for business magazine professionals working in circulation, advertising sales, and production, according to Folio data. Although there is flipflopping as to whether business or consumer magazine professionals make more money, women consistently are paid less than men. While the surveys consider both business and consumer magazine professionals, differences from year to year or category to category between the two types of magazine are likely due to the different mix of magazines involved. Adding to the research dilemma, there's no attempt to compare business magazines within particular areas, either vertically or horizontally.

Outside of Folio data, which is flawed, finding demographic information about the people working at business, trade or professional magazines is difficult. Like MPA, the Association of Business Publishers (ABP) releases salary data from surveys in confidential reports only to members.

A Society of National Association Publications (SNAP) salary survey in 1987 reinforced some of the findings of the Folio surveys, although it was limited to a random list of 1,034 association publications.(54) Two findings resulting from the 485 questionnaires returned were particularly relevant to those interested in salary and status data. The first was that "the majority of positions held in association publications are held by women, although there are a majority of males in the positions of publisher, editor-in-chief, and advertising salesperson."(55)

The second was an analysis of average salary by sex and age. Not surprisingly, males made more money than females in almost every job category, and particularly in the positions of publisher, editor-in-chief, senior editor, editorial assistant, circulation director, advertising director, graphic designer, and business manager. No analysis was made of race.(56)

Additional data can be found in only two surveys by journalism and mass communication professors that have been presented at annual conventions of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC). Dennis W. Jeffers, in his 1987 paper "A Descriptive Study of Perceived Impact of Gender on Employment Status, Type of Work, Industry Relationships, Working Environment and Job Satisfaction in Livestock Industry Magazines," pointed out that gender concerns had not, to date, been investigated in trade or business magazines. Instead, the main area studied where gender predicts income, and where the problem has been clearly identified is in the public relations and business communications areas.(57)

Jeffers, an associate professor at Central Michigan University, pointed out:

> Many industrial publications are associated with industries that, if linked to one gender, have been traditionally linked to males. Such is the case with the livestock industry--a multi-billion dollar segment of the agricultural industry that is responsible for the breeding and marketing of cattle, hogs, sheep and horses. Granted, the 'cowboy' might be a 'cowgirl' in some instances. But for the most part, the livestock industry is 'traditional' in that women play very narrow and specific roles.(58)

Jeffers' questionnaire was given to 69 livestock magazine staffers attending an annual meeting in 1986 in Fort Worth, Texas. Although nearly 60 percent of the respondents were female, "women are under-represented in editorial positions and about equal in other positions on the magazines scrutinized." These other positions included advertising, design and production.(59)

Jeffers' data, which were consistent with findings of other gender studies, showed that "...in spite of the influx of women in this field...men are the managers and women are the technicians at livestock magazines."(60)

Jeffers did not detail salaries among women and men in the field (although the Livestock Publications Council did so in a recent survey whose results were made available to its members only).(61) But he did ask some questions relating to salary and bias: "Significantly more women than men believe men earn more than women for the same job in the livestock magazine field. The same is true when respondents are asked if men get raises faster than women--female respondents believe they do, male respondents believe they don't."(62)

Jeffers' research added reliability to results of other gender-related studies in mass communication, while extending such concerns to the magazine industry. As Jeffers explained, "This study confirms that women are relegated to the role of production technician and not the communication manager. In this case, it means that women are the 'hired hands' on the livestock magazine and not the 'ranch foreman.'"(63)

Jeffers urged that additional research be done to "identify and neutralize" the "subtle" factors affecting female employees in mass communication organizations. Concluded Jeffers:

> Finally, gender-related studies such as this one should be extended to other types of industrial magazines. In particular, researchers should investigate whether the same kinds of problems are present in magazines that cover other male dominated industries. What about industrial magazines covering female dominated industries...do they have the same kinds of problems? Clearly, there are many opportunities for additional research.(64)

Jeffers focused on a very narrow part of the business or trade magazine category. Kathleen L. Endres, an assistant professor at the University of Akron, provided the only research on the business magazine category as a whole in her paper, "The Business Press Journalists: Who They Are, What They Do and How They View Their Craft," presented at the 1988 AEJMC Convention.

Pointing out that surprisingly little is known about the business press or its journalists, Endres provided what is probably the most comprehensive demographic profile of business press editorial personnel to date, along with information about work patterns and perceptions of the field. Since no comprehensive list of full-time business magazine journalists exists, Endres drew her sample from SRDS's Business Publication Rates and Data. She ended up with 374 questionnaires (45 percent response rate), which "represent a cross section of journalists in the business press. They cover a number of different industries, live in different parts of the country and work for periodicals that span the circulation range of free to paid, the frequency rate of weekly to quarterly and the formats varied from magazine to newspaper."(65)

Endres found that "the typical business press reporter or editor is a microcosm of U.S. journalists in general. Typically, the business journalists are likely to be white males in their mid-30s with bachelor's degrees."(66) This finding supports Weaver and Wilhoit's research. However, Endres' research goes a long way toward providing information about women in this area of the magazine industry.

Although men made up 54 percent of those responding to Endres' survey, it was discovered that females outnumber males in periodicals covering certain types of industries.

> For example, women outnumber men on periodicals covering the retail and service industries, two areas where women dominate in the general labor force. Just the opposite was the case in periodicals covering businesses that traditionally hired men. In the periodicals covering the professions, building trades, industry, business/management, transportation and the other fields, men outnumber women. The only exception to this are the publications covering the medical/science field, where women outnumber men by a sizeable margin.(67)

Endres found that men and women working in the business magazine area differed in several key respects, in areas that seem to follow research done in public relations and that validates Folio salary surveys:

--Women have less professional journalism experience than men responding to the survey. On the average, men have 13.2 years experience versus 7.3 years for women.(68)

--Women are more likely to get their professional experience in different ways than men. Men are more likely to work for a newspaper first, while more women start at other business publications or in public relations. Said Endres, "Those differences, while not statistically significant, may help explain why women and men hold different types of jobs."(69)

--Women are less likely to hold the jobs of editor or senior editor than men, with men serving in those top positions 50 percent of the time to women's 25 percent. Only in the position of managing editor is there any parity.

--Women earn substantially less than men, with an average annual income of $25,658 versus $39,559 for men. Endres reported, "The disparity could be found across all editorial jobs. Whether managing editors, editors, senior editors or reporters, women are paid less than men." For example, female managing editors were paid an average of $26,666, while males received $36,379. Women editors earned $33,275 to men's $45,303. Differences in salaries tended to be smaller in the entry-level jobs, Endres found. Yet even the female assistant/associate editor, the most common job for women at business magazines, received less pay than her male peer, $21,956 to $24,714. The smallest differential was the reporter slot, where men received $27,500 and women $27,000.(70)

Endres' study also provided racial information, something that rarely has been covered in magazine research. The overwhelming majority of business press professionals were Caucasian, 98 percent of those answering the questionnaire. Only eight members of minority groups were identified: three blacks, one Oriental and four Hispanics (2 percent). According to Endres, the minorities were split between men and women. But more disturbing, "that ethnic breakdown means that minority groups are more greatly underrepresented in the business press than the journalism field in general or the U.S. population."(71)

Endres included other demographic information, such as birthplace, education, college major, marital status, memberships in professional organizations, as well as information about work patterns (job title, duties, job training, use of sources, relationship with sources and readers).

SURVEYS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS MAGAZINES

This, the largest category of magazines in the U.S., is also the hardest to study. So it's not surprising that there has been very little research specifically dealing with house organs. The International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), consisting of about 11,000 communicators in the United States, does not identify how many of its members manage, edit, or produce either an internal or external magazine, nor are tabs kept on how many companies might be producing magazines.(72) Yet, according to the IABC Profile '87, "internal audiences for communicators responding to this survey average 6,500....external audiences were, on average, 72 times greater: 471,000 individuals."(73) Unfortunately, no analysis is available as to the publication format used to communicate with these in-house, customer or prospective client/user audiences. There is information about communicator titles, with editor being listed 15 percent of the time.(74) However, as with titles at consumer and business magazines, titles in corporate communications or public relations areas are not consistent. A manager or director is just as likely to produce or edit a magazine as an editor, coordinator, or specialist.

Don Ranly, professor of journalism at the University of Missouri-Columbia, recently reported on a demographic and attitudinal survey of 500 IABC members who list their job title as "editor."(75) Of the 263 respondents returning the survey (52 percent response rate), "the primary internal publications they have edited varies: 116 are magazines, 72 are newsletters, and 67 are magapapers."(76). (The way Ranly has phrased this sentence raises the question of whether the respondents still were editing those publications at the time of the survey.) Regardless of the phrasing, this was a first step at identifying who edits the public relations magazines (also known as "house organs," internal, or external organizational magazines).

Unfortunately, no further specific information is provided about the magazine editors. Ranly is primarily concerned with exploring "the demographic backgrounds of organization editors, their perceptions of their jobs, and particularly their perception of themselves as professional journalists."(77) Consequently, the reported data are concerned with all responses, regardless of medium, relating to demographics, and attitudes toward job, self, and publication. No salary information is provided, and the study centers around attitudinal satisfactions. For those who specifically study magazines, the Ranly material is too broadly focused to be of help.

MAGAZINE RESEARCH IN GENERAL

Research about magazines, whether involving magazine journalism or the magazine publishing industry, has been scanty. Work on the demographics, attitudes and beliefs of magazine professionals also has been neglected. Scholarly magazine research has lagged far behind the work being done on other aspects of the mass media by mass communication researchers.

Peter Gerlach, writing in Journalism Quarterly, has documented the infrequency of magazine research in publications on journalism and mass communication. Studying the years from 1964 through 1983 in Journalism Quarterly, a key refereed journal in the field, Gerlach found that only 6 percent of the articles published dealt with magazines.(78) About half (53 percent) of these research articles consisted of content analysis, followed by historical (22 percent) and economic (11 percent) topics.(79) Other research dealt with effect analysis (6 percent), readership (5 percent), communication analysis (4 percent), and education (1 percent).(80)

Gerlach surveyed 40 AEJMC members who had published one or more articles about magazine research in Journalism Quarterly, asking their opinion of American magazine research, among other questions.(81) With 32 surveys returned (80 percent response rate), Gerlach found, "All in all, 68.7 percent of the respondents thought that magazine research has been unsatisfactory in one respect or another."(82)

Pointing out that descriptive content analysis and not studies of processes and effects have dominated magazine research, respondents also commented that magazine research is not a well funded area; that there have been too few systematic studies of the industry in general; and that the vastness of the field in general has made it difficult to study.(83)

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE MAGAZINE SURVEYS

There are four areas that need to be addressed before any surveys in magazine journalism and magazine publishing can be studied adequately: articulation of what the magazine field involves; definitions that tackle the methodological as well as the structural and theoretical problems inherent in the magazine industry; linkages among researchers in the field; and analysis of the demographic and social order of magazine professionals.

Regarding the first area, there is a lack of agreement on how to categorize magazines. As Marcia Prior-Miller, an associate professor in journalism at Iowa State University, puts it, "There is a lack of conceptual clarity among both magazine professionals and academic scholars about the types of magazines available and the factors which might be considered principles common to all and the distinguishing uniquenesses among magazines."(84) She is developing a typology, or theory of magazines. Says Prior-Miller, "Without an adequate typology, designing quality comparative studies of magazines and magazine organizations and the professionals working in them is not possible."(85)

Look at any current magazine study or mass media textbook and the problem becomes evident. There's no agreement on how to categorize magazines, much less how to determine the exact dimensions of the industry.

Most researchers use Frank Luther Mott's class definition of a magazine "as a bound pamphlet issued more or less regularly and containing a variety of reading matter."(86) However, Donald N. Wood points out, "Derived from the French word magasin, meaning 'warehouse' or 'storehouse,' the modern magazine almost defies explicit description. About the only generalizations one dares to toss out are that the magazine is **usually** bound or stapled (unlike most newspapers) and is **normally** published on a regular schedule (unlike most books). The one charactertistic common to the magazine industry is that, with a few notable exceptions, magazines are aimed at specialized audiences."(87)

One result is that some textbooks divide magazines (also referred to as periodicals) into general consumer, special interest consumer, business, association, farm, and public relations.(88) Others say there are four basic categories: consumer; business, technical, trade and professional; association; and company publications for customers and employees of specific companies.(89) There are those who say magazines are of four principal types--farm, business, consumer, and religious.(90) And still others never attempt to categorize magazines, but instead list types--news magazines, city and regional magazines, women's magazines, magazines without advertisements, organizational publications, controlled circulation magazines, literary-critical magazines, political opinion magazines, large-audience, general-interest picture magazines, and so forth.(91) There simply is no consensus.

However, researchers who specialize in magazines (of whom there are very few) seem to be moving toward a three-part division: consumer magazines (those publications of general or specialized interest sold to the public); business magazines (which deal in various specific aspects of particular industries, businesses or professions and which may be sold or given away free); and public relations magazines (which are published by corporations for specific internal or external audiences and which are almost always free). Farm publications would fall under the business category as would most association magazines, although some might be closer to the public relations arena. Religious magazines could be considered either a part of the consumer or the business category.

Until there is agreement on a typology, quality comparative studies of magazines and the professionals working on them are not possible.

Regarding the second area, there are major difficulties in identifying the universe of magazine titles from which to draw samples for cross-sectional study. Since there's no standard magazine classification or definition, the range becomes awesome. Depending on what reference you choose, you can make a case for just about any set of numbers for the magazine industry.

The 1988 Standard Periodical Directory provides data on over 65,000 periodicals in the United States and Canada, with the bulk of them being American. To be included, the periodical need only be published at least once every two years. Types of periodicals included are consumer magazines; trade journals; newsletters; government publications; house organs; directories; transactions and proceedings of scientific societies; yearbooks; etc. The 239 subject categories range from accounting to zoology.(92)

The Gale Directory of Publications (formerly Ayer), often cited in magazine research and mass communication texts, lists 11,092 periodicals for 1990.(93)

The numbers become more manageable, with more agreement among those in the magazine industry, when you turn to the main source of information for advertisers. As of December 31, 1989, Standard Rate and Data Service, Inc. (SRDS), which publishes data on consumer, farm and business publications, lists 4,199 magazines with primary listings in the business edition; 792 association publications are listed.(94) In the consumer and farm classification, SRDS lists more than 2,100 titles.(95) However, magazines that do not take advertising, or are dependent only to a limited extent on advertising, are not listed.

Other important magazine figures are derived from the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC), which audits more than 600 magazines in terms of revenue and circulation.(96) This group of magazines, which include titles ranging from Time to Field and Stream to Savvy, are the elite of the magazine universe and the ones most familiar to readers.

The Magazine Publishers of America (MPA), with 214 member publishers representing 752 U.S. magazines, uses Gale, SRDS, and ABC figures in its consumer magazine research.(97) The Association of Business Publishers (ABP) has 588 member publications out of a potential universe of 1,310, since membership is limited to audited, for-profit magazines (98) Both organizations point out that there are still many consumer and business magazines that exist, but are not audited, surveyed, or even listed anywhere.

The Society of National Association Publications (SNAP) numbered only 200 publication members for 1988, although there are more than 3,500 associations in Washington, D.C. alone; most have some sort of publication.(99) A survey by the American Society of Association Executives, with more than 16,000 members, revealed that 95 percent of the respondents issued a periodical publication.(100)

The problem intensifies when you turn to the largest and hardest to identify category--that of public relations magazines, or house organs. No census has ever been taken, so estimates range from 10,000 (101) to 100,000 magazines.(102)

Add to this the fact that new magazines are started every day, with consumer titles proliferating at the rate of anywhere from 150 to 300 a year, with only 10 percent surviving a second year.(103) Start-up figures for business publications and public relations magazines are not available.

Government data do not clarify the magazine industry either. The Statistical Abstract of the U.S.1989 cites the Gale Directory figures, which include semi-weekly, weekly, biweekly, semi-monthly, monthly, bimonthly, and quarterly periodicals.(104) Bureau of Labor Statistics data are based on the printing and publishing industry as a whole, which includes newspapers and books as well as printing establishments. Figures for periodicals are not always specified, and the editor/reporter occupation classification is not limited to magazines.

J. William Click and Russell N. Baird summarize it best: "Mere figures cannot convey the magnitude of an industry so diverse as the magazine industry."(105)

As Prior-Miller points out, "Directories both duplicate the listings of other directories and omit large numbers of publications. Descriptions of the criteria for the inclusion or exclusion of titles is often less than adequate from the scientific perspective. Thus, any effort to design a careful sample immediately is confronted with this weakness in the sampling frame."(106)

Third, those interested in magazine research have difficulty building upon prior studies because of the lack of ongoing research. There is a great deal of fragmented research, or as Prior-Miller says, "Existing studies tend to be discrete and atheoretical. New generations of scholars tend to be overwhelmed by the lack of a coherent body of research on the history of the development of the field, the on-going social order, and the problems of communications within the medium. Given the dominant model of research on other media and the intellectual and financial support for continuing to work within that dominant model, young scholars understandably turn their interests in those directions."(107)

Finally, until these methodological and structural concerns are combined with functioning definitions and terminologies, the professionals working in the magazine industry cannot be studied systemically. There is no agreement on job titles, nor has there been an attempt to break down staff responsibilities, depending on the size or type of magazine. There is no information about entry level jobs to share with journalism majors interested in a magazine career.

Existing magazine salary surveys are inconsistent, incomplete and inconclusive. What is needed is a magazine project along the lines of Weaver and Wilhoit's study of American news journalists.

Then, and only then, can issues, forces, and interactions relating to the magazine industry, such as status and salary, clearly be addressed, allowing magazine data to be added to mass media survey reports.

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THE THIRD-PERSON EFFECT AND SUPPORT FOR RESTRICTIONS ON PORNOGRAPHY

Albert C. Gunther
Department of Agricultural Journalism
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Madison, WI 53706
(608) 262-0482
bitnet: AGUNTHER@Wiscmacc

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ABSTRACT

THE THIRD-PERSON EFFECT AND SUPPORT FOR RESTRICTIONS ON PORNOGRAPHY

Public support for censorship of mass media pornography is often justified by the argument that such content will have negative effects on society. While it is clear that people are concerned with the effects of such content on others, it is not clear whether they are also concerned about effects on themselves. The questions of interest in this study are whether people systematically estimate the effects of pornography to be significantly greater for others than for themselves, a phenomenon often labeled the third-person effect, and whether their support for censorship of pornography is related to that perceived effect on others.

This paper reports on telephone interviews with 648 U.S. adults who were asked about their perceptions of pornography's effects on themselves and others, and about their support for various restrictions. The data revealed a significant third-person perception. In addition, support for restrictions was significantly influenced by perceived effect on others, even when controlling for numerous related variables. This outcome was particularly strong for respondents who exhibited the classic third-person perception -- establishing an important link between the two parts of the hypothesis.

THE THIRD-PERSON EFFECT AND SUPPORT FOR RESTRICTIONS ON PORNOGRAPHY

Censorship of mass media content is often justified by the argument that such content will have negative effects on society. For example, the 1986 Attorney General's Commission on Pornography (the Meese Commission) interviewed hundreds of witnesses, viewed quantities of X-rated material, and concluded that pornography is harmful to people and that government should take action to suppress it. It seems clear that, like the Meese Commissioners, most people are concerned about the effects of pornographic media content on society at large (Newsweek, 1985). But it is not clear whether they are similarly concerned about effects on themselves.

In a provocative 1983 paper, W. Phillips Davison cited pornography censorship as an illustration of what he called the third-person effect. Davison's third-person hypothesis consists of two elements. The first is a perceptual bias, leading people to systematically estimate a communication to have more influence on others than on themselves. The second element, an attitudinal or behavioral effect, proposes that people are likely to react according to their estimate of effects on others. Davison used film censors as an example: it is difficult, he noted, to find a censor who will acknowledge any adverse effects of pornography on him or herself, yet censors are certain about pornography's erosion of morality in society at large, and their own actions to restrict media content are grounded on that certainty.

After some years of empirical research, there is more than anecdotal evidence to support the first component of the third-person phenomenon. The fact that people generally perceive a greater effect of media content on others than on themselves is a robust finding, tested and affirmed across a wide variety of communication contexts. People have exhibited this phenomenon in judgments about the effects of the mini-series Amerika (Lasorsa, 1989), and in media reports about apartheid demonstrations (Mutz, 1987). People estimate that others are more influenced by product advertising (Gunther and Thorson, 1990) and political advertising (Rucinski and Salmon, 1990). Defamatory news articles about prominent persons have produced the third-person perception (Gunther, in press; Cohen et al., 1988) as have news broadcasts about Middle East conflict (Vallone, Ross and Lepper, 1985; Perloff, 1989).

One question, both important and challenging to resolve, is one of accuracy -- whether the discrepancy in a person's estimate of message effects on self versus others arises from an underestimation of effect on self, or overestimation of the effect on others. Two experimental studies (Gunther, in press; Gunther and Thorson, 1990) have addressed this problem by comparing estimates to actual measures of opinion change resulting from both print and broadcast stimuli. The findings favor the view that people err in overestimating effects on others, findings with significant implications for the questions to be raised later in this paper.

A second important question is whether the third-person perception can be explained as an artifact of question order. This methodological difficulty stems from the fact that respondents are typically asked identical questions about media effects on themselves and on others. Aware of the comparison they are asked to make, people may adjust their second response to cast themselves in a more desirable, less persuasible, posture. This research was designed in part to control for such rival explanations of third-person perceptions.

The perceptual bias in the third-person hypothesis has attracted much research attention, but its importance depends crucially on the consequences of these perceptions. There has been little examination, however, of the second component to the third-person hypothesis. That second component proposes that peoples' perceptions of influence on others may incline them to react. A perceived negative influence on the morals of others, for example, is what motivates the censor to suppress pornographic media content. There is an irony in this part of the hypothesis, for it suggests that the real communication effect "may thus be due not to the reaction of the ostensible audience but rather to the behavior of those who anticipate, or think they perceive, some reaction on the part of others" (Davison, 1983, p. 3).

However, the small amount of research devoted to documenting the second component of the third-person phenomenon has produced little support for this part of the proposition. A study of the effects of political advertising, and negative political advertising (Rucinski and Salmon, 1990), did show some relationship between perceived effect on others and support for monitoring of media content. The study of a libelous news article (Gunther, in press), however, indicated that people were not more likely to award money for damages even when they thought others were more likely to be influenced than they were themselves.

A pair of recent experiments, however, has suggested that a contingent condition -- the apparent negative consequences of some media content -- may underlie the third-person phenomenon. Gunther and Mundy (1990) demonstrated that topics with risky or negative consequences produced perceptions of larger influence on others than on self, but that beneficial topics produced no difference in self-other estimates. The second study (Gunther and Thorson, 1990) generally found a third-person effect associated with product advertising (where source motives are inherently suspect), but no such effect for public service announcements. Indeed, almost without exception research documenting the third-person effect has employed message content that is likely to be seen as having potentially negative consequences for its audience.

It is possible that that contingency may play a part in the second component of the hypothesis as well. That is, it may be that people take action in response to their perceptions of effects on others only when they perceive seriously negative or harmful outcomes.

Such serious outcomes are the stuff of contemporary debate over pornography. Definitions of the consequences of pornography are expanding to include not just offensiveness, but also harm (Wilson, Linz & Randall, 1990), exemplified by the argument that pornography violates the civil rights of women (Downs, 1990). Thus, in gauging perceptions, this study will focus on the potentially harmful effects of pornography.

Whatever its demerits, or virtues, pornography presents one of the most challenging topics in the study of public opinion. It is difficult to define and difficult to measure. A great deal of empirical research (see, e.g., Donnerstein and Berkowitz, 1981; Zillman and Bryant, 1989) and public policy debate (see, e.g., Downs, 1990; Randall, 1990) has focused specifically on the quantity and nature of its consequences. But pornography is useful as a context for this research question because, as suggested above, it may exemplify both components of the third-person effect. Davison himself proposed that censorship presented one of the most interesting fields for speculating about the third-person effect. The particularly harmful influences that people perceive to result from pornographic material might be expected to have the most direct bearing on whether, and how much, to regulate pornography. The question of interest in this study is whether people estimate the effects of pornography to be significantly greater for others than for themselves, and whether their support for censorship of pornography is related to that perceived effect on others.

However, pornography is additionally challenging to study because attitudes toward few other issues arise from such a complexity of circumstances. Along with the perception of pornography's harmful effects, sentiment in favor of restricting pornography may result from gender differences, political ideology, attitudes toward freedom of expression, and, of course, one's own exposure to pornography. Women are more likely to favor restrictions on pornography (Herrman and Bordner, 1983; U.S. Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, 1970) and political conservatives have been long-time advocates of that position (though recently strongly liberal and/or feminist individuals find themselves, ironically, in the same camp). A person's attitude toward First Amendment issues and freedom of expression in general is likely to shape his or her attitude toward restrictions on pornographic content;[1] although the extent that support for freedom of expression coincides with liberal or feminist political views may cloud that relationship (Thompson, Chaffee & Oshagan, 1990). In addition, one would expect that those who indicate more exposure to pornography would be less likely to support its regulation (Howard, Reifler and Liptzin, 1970; U.S. Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, 1970;

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[1] Such a relationship will likely be moderated, however, by the fact that while people generally agree strongly with the abstract principle of free speech, their support drops sharply when considering particular situations (McCloskey & Brill, 1983).

Newsweek, 1985).

The scope of previous third-person effect research is limited by the scope of sample populations. Many tests of the hypothesis have been experimental, with appropriate subject pools. But the parameters in most survey research represent academic campuses or communities, where education or other factors may bias the outcome. National-level data would provide greater generalizability, as well as a valid comparison of respondents' aggregate estimates of effects on self and their corresponding judgments about other people in general. Though it can't tell us about accuracy of judgments (not without some valid gauge of the genuine effects of exposure to pornography), a representative national sample will reveal the extent of any actual discrepancy between aggregate perceptions of effects on self and others.

Therefore, this research was designed in pursuit of a number of goals: (1) to measure perceived effects of pornography at personal and social levels in order to document any third-person perception, (2) to look for evidence of a connection between the third-person perception and support for restrictions on pornography, and (3) to incorporate other likely predictors of attitudes toward restrictions that might elaborate on the relationship.

Two hypotheses corresponding to the perceptual and behavioral components of the third-person effect model were posed:

Hypothesis 1. People will estimate X-rated media content to have a greater negative effect on others than on themselves.

Hypothesis 2. The perceived negative effects of X-rated media content on others will be positively related to support for restrictions on pornography.

METHOD

Subjects

Respondents in this study were 648 adults aged 18 or over and randomly sampled from the continental U.S. population. The data were collected in a telephone survey by the University of Wisconsin Letters and Science Survey Center which conducts about 50 interviews a week in a rolling cross-sectional sample. The items included in this study ran from October 18, 1989 to January 23, 1990. Trained interviewers administered the computer-aided survey and made up to seven callbacks to numbers not answering. The response rate was 58 percent.[2] Comparisons based on key demographic variables such as age, gender, and income indicated that these respondents did not differ significantly from those in the General Social Survey and the National Survey of Families and Households.

Procedure and Measurement

Midway through the survey the issue of X-rated media content was introduced and respondents were asked about their own exposure to such content -- specifically how often, if ever, they had seen or come across X-rated films or magazines.[3]

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[2] This response rate was calculated by dividing number of completed interviews by completed interviews plus refusals.

Immediately following this item they answered a series of questions about their perceptions of the effects of such content on themselves and on other people in general. Respondents were asked about the effect of X-rated films or magazines on their own moral values concerning sex, and on other people's moral values concerning sex. They also answered about the effect on their own attitudes toward the opposite sex, about the attitudes of men in general toward women, and about the attitudes of women in general toward men. Each item was accompanied by the following response scale: (1) a large negative effect (2) a small negative effect (3) no effect at all (4) a small positive effect (5) a large positive effect.[4] Though the two items measuring perceived effects of X-rated content -- moral values concerning sex and attitudes toward the opposite sex -- clearly tap different dimensions, they were nevertheless substantially intercorrelated. Responses to these two items for "self" produced a reliability score of .69, and estimates of both effects for "others" produced an index reliability of .82. A measure of perceived pornography effects combining the two was used for most of the hypothesis tests, although for some of the results these two measures are described separately as well.

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[3] This wording, "X-rated films or magazines," was incorporated to avoid leading respondents via connotations associated with the term pornography.

[4] Interviewers were cautioned to be alert to difficulties because of the sensitive nature of these questions. A number of respondents said they did not know, or had no answer, to one or more of the questions asking them to estimate the effects of X-rated content, but interviewers reported almost no unease or hesitation to answer as a result of the content of these questions.

The computer-assisted system allowed for a number of methodological refinements. One, the questions about effects on one's self were posed slightly differently for people who said they had never had any exposure to X-rated material. They were asked "If for some reason you were exposed to films or magazines with X-rated content . . . ." Second, the attitude item was keyed to a respondent's gender so that men were asked about the effect on their own attitudes toward women, and women about their n attitudes toward men. Finally, to provide a check on the possible order effect of asking people the same questions about both themselves and others, the computer randomly branched each respondent into a question sequence that asked either about self first or others first. (Appendix A contains a complete sample sequence of the survey items described here.)

Support for restrictions on pornography was measured with a four-item index adapted from Thompson, Chaffee and Oshagan, (1989): "I support legislation to prohibit the sale of pornographic materials," "Anyone who wants to have pornographic materials should be allowed to," "The government has more important things to do than regulate pornography" and "We should have a panel to screen offensive material before its allowed to be sold in this community." Each statement was accompanied by Likert-scale responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

The index of attitude toward regulation of pornography showed acceptable internal reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of .69.

In a separate part of the survey respondents answered another Likert-scaled question about their support for freedom of speech: "We should have NO restrictions on freedom of speech or expression in this country."

The survey also included demographic measures: age, sex, education, race, religion, political affiliation and whether or not there were children living in the respondent's household.

The first hypothesis was tested with paired-samples t-tests comparing respondents estimates of the effect of X-rated media content on themselves to their estimates of the same effects on others. The second hypothesis was tested with a multiple regression equation assessing the role of perceived effect on others in predicting support for restrictions on pornography. An array of control variables was included in this analysis.

RESULTS

Descriptive findings

The question measuring exposure to X-rated content resulted in findings consistent with other research (Thompson, et al., 1990; Bryant, 1989). About one-quarter of the population (26 percent) said they had never seen or come across X-rated media content. Those reporting occasional exposure constituted by far the largest group (62 percent), while another 11 percent reported seeing X-rated material somewhat often or very often.

It should also be noted that 2 percent of respondents did not know or chose not to answer either question about the effects of X-rated material on themselves, and 4.5 percent did not respond to any item about effects on others.[5] Respondents who answered at least one but not all of the effects items in either category were retained in the regression analysis by substituting the mean score for their missing value.

Hypothesis 1: The Perceptual Bias.

Hypothesis 1 proposed that people will estimate X-rated media content to have a greater negative effect on others than on themselves. The data supported this difference in judgments quite clearly. Table 1 indicates that a majority of respondents, 61 percent, perceive others to be more negatively influenced by X-rated material than themselves. The third-person phenomenon is evident in both indicators, but it appears stronger for perceived effect on attitudes toward the opposite sex than on sexual morals.

Tables 1 & 2 about here

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[5] A t-test showed no significant difference between omitted respondents and those included in the analysis in their attitudes toward restriction of pornography. Nor did they differ on most other attributes, although they were more likely to be women, and to be somewhat less educated.

The significance of these differences is reported in Table 2. It affirms that people do perceive that others will be more influenced by pornography in both the combined effect index (t=8.36, p< .001) and in the individual measures. The third-person outcome is reported by both males (t=6.57, p<.001) and females (t=5.42, p<.001), but males estimate less negative effect overall, and they see themselves as being only slightly negatively influenced by pornography. (These subgroup patterns are illustrated in Figure 1.) Interestingly, respondents who reported no exposure to pornography produced the smallest third-person pattern, primarily because they estimated that they would be negatively affected by X-rated material quite a bit if they were exposed to it themselves.

Figure 1 about here

Test for order effects. One of the methodological challenges to third-person phenomenon findings lies in the potential for bias when people are comparing themselves to others. Typically respondents are first asked about effects on themselves followed by questions about the same effects for others. There are a number of reasons why fairly consistent third-person effect findings -- estimates of greater effect or influence on others -- might be an artifact of this question order.

However, the random assignment of question order in this design revealed no such order effect. The difference people

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estimated between effects on self and others was the same (t=.49, n.s.) whether respondents were asked about themselves first or others first. This is not a complete defense, however. It is also possible that respondents might be systematically adjusting their second response once aware that they are comparing. But these respondents' scale scores also do not vary by question order. T-tests of the two groups revealed no significant difference in estimates of effect on self (t=.24, n.s.) or others (t=.83, n.s.).

Hypothesis 2: Effect on Opinion.

Hypothesis 2 proposed that perceived negative effects of X-rated media content on others will be positively related to support for restrictions on pornography. The multiple regression analysis reported in Table 3 bears on this hypothesis,

Table 3 about here

and supports it. Blocks of predictor variables were regressed on the index of support for restrictions. Table 3 reports the increment to explained variance (R^2 change) for each block or variable, and the significance of that increment. All factors except political party showed a meaningful association with the dependent variable. Females, those with a religious affiliation, and those reporting no exposure to pornography were more likely to favor its regulation. Attitude toward the principle of free expression was the strongest factor -- those who supported free speech opposed regulation. More perceived effect on self also predicted more support for regulation. And perceived effect on others, even when controlling for these additional variables, was significantly related (F= 6.58, p<.05) to support for pornography restrictions.

However, that last finding stands rather meekly in the shadow of other independent variables. Among meaningful factors, perceived effect on others added least to the explanatory value of the equation. In particular, people seem to have been a great deal more responsive to possible effects on themselves when considering pornography restrictions. That is an important point, because testing effect on opinion (hypothesis 2) with the full sample may partially obscure the third-person process precisely because it incorporates a substantial number of non-third-person effect cases. That is, the full sample includes many people (39 percent) who reported no difference between themselves and others, or even more negative effect on themselves, and thus failed to demonstrate the first component of the third-person effect.

Table 4 about here

Therefore, the same regression analysis was applied to those people, three-fifths of the sample, who did perceive that others would be more negatively affected than themselves. The results, presented in Table 4, are little different in general, but the second component of the third-person effect is far more prominent. In this case perceived effect on others is a highly significant predictor, outweighing all but the free-speech principle. It explains 6 percent of the variance, twice that of perceived effect on self.

DISCUSSION

These data offer perhaps the strongest evidence yet of the tendency for people to estimate that some types of media content will have more negative effect on others than on themselves. The national sample lends substantial external validity to this third-person perception. In addition, controlling for question order effectively eliminates the possibility that the finding is an artifact of measurement.

Further, though one cannot conclusively determine the direction of error, it is certain that people in the aggregate are wrong -- they do systematically judge others more negatively influenced by pornography than themselves. Either they are underestimating influence on themselves, overestimating influence on others, or doing some of both. As noted previously, some past research suggests overestimation, an outcome which bears importantly on the implications of attitudinal effects found in these data.

Though past research has not drawn a clear connection between the third-person perception and attitudes or behaviors, that connection can be clearly drawn here. People do favor restrictions on pornography based on their perception of effects on others, even when controlling for significant related factors. The particularly negative or anti-social consequences that many people associate with pornography may be a necessary condition for the behavioral effect.

But investigating this second component of the third-person hypothesis raises important theoretical questions. It is not clear, for example, how or why the perceptual and attitudinal components are linked. Existing theoretical foundations for both components describe them as two distinct processes. One is the perceptual bias, often defined in terms of attribution theory and related models (see, e.g., Gunther, in press; Rucinski and Salmon, 1990). The second is the effect on attitude or behavior resulting from perceptions about others, sometimes described as the "impersonal impact" hypothesis (see, e.g., Tyler and Cook, 1984; Noelle-Neumann, 1977). The issue is what connects them, if, indeed, they are connected at all.

If one follows the reasoning, some of it implicit, in Davison's (1983) paper, perceptual and attitudinal aspects of the third-person phenomenon are connected by the idea that "more negative effect on others" is what is likely to give rise to an opinion or action. It is the particular category of impersonal impact defined by the first component of the third-person effect (negative influence) that arouses the second component (inclination to forestall that influence). Hence the particular importance of the analysis reported in Table 4 -- it is the subsample of respondents who perceive more negative effect on others that most strongly exhibits the attitudinal effect. Within that group, the more negative the perceived effect of pornography on others, the more positive is support for restrictions on pornography.

The subsample analysis, however, raises questions about generalizability that only future research can answer. Are these particular respondents prone to see a third-person effect in general, and therefore more prone to act in response to that perception? Or is this subsample composed of people whose perceptions are specific to the case of pornography? If the latter case is true, it remains to be seen whether the full third-person model applies across other situations of this type.

The results of this study have interesting implications for public policy. Since the perception of effect on others is significantly related to support for restrictions on pornography, it is fairly certain that a component of that support is based on an erroneous perception. In some cases that relationship may be inconsequential. But if we assume that people are systematically overestimating the social-level effects of pornography (and research addressing this question in other contexts finds that assumption to be so), then the third-person effect on opinion may be a socially dysfunctional one.

The dependent measures in this study represent respondents' opinions about public policies or actions concerning pornography. They can be considered an indication of the extent to which respondents would be likely to speak, work, vote or otherwise act in favor of restricting pornography. But, as public opinion increasingly influences the actions of legislators and policy makers, public attitudes toward the pornography issue become more important apart from any individual behavior they predict. Attitudes that stem from the third-person perception are likely to have social consequences whether or not people act on those attitudes themselves.

But public policy aside, these findings are meaningful for mass media and public opinion theory because they suggest that it is primarily the third-person perception that gives rise to social level responses. Whether they are correct or not, people will react in response to perceived influence on others -- particularly when they see others as more negatively affected by media content.

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Table 1. Percentage of respondents perceiving more, less, or no difference in the effect of X-rated media content

	sexual morals	attitudes re opposite sex	both
More effect on other people	44%	55%	61%
Same effect on self and others	36	28	19
More effect on self	19	18	20

Table 2. Mean estimates of effect of X-rated content on self and others. Lower score indicates more negative effect.

	self	others	difference	t-value
Effect on moral values	2.76 (.78)	2.45 (1.28)	.30	5.19***
Effect on attitudes	2.83 (.66)	2.37 (1.13)	.42	8.72***
Combined effect	2.77 (.64)	2.38 (1.07)	.39	8.36***
Exposure				
none	2.63 (.60)	2.37 (1.19)	.26	2.33*
some	2.78 (.63)	2.37 (1.02)	.41	7.52***
Gender				
males	2.92 (.60)	2.51 (1.07)	.41	6.57***
females	2.64 (.65)	2.27 (1.07)	.37	5.42***

Note: Items are scaled so that 1=large negative effect, 2=small negative effect, 3=no effect at all, 4=small positive effect, and 5=large positive effect. Standard deviations are listed in parentheses. Significance levels are calculated using paired-samples t-tests.

* p<.05 *** p<.001

Table 3. Full sample regression coefficients predicting support for regulation of pornography

	Beta	Cumulative R^2	R^2 change	F (R^2 change)
Genetic				
Sex	-.22			
Age	-.09	.05	.05	17.75***
Demographic				
Children	.02			
Education	.06			
Religion	-.22	.10	.05	11.88***
Political				
Democrat	.02			
Republican	-.05	.10	.01	1.65
Other Factors				
Attitude toward Free Expression	-.25	.16	.06	43.78***
Exposure to X-rated content	.18	.19	.03	20.29***
Perc'd Effect on Self	.14	.21	.02	14.14***
Perc'd Effect on Others	.10	.22	.01	6.58*

N=603

Note: Higher score on the dependent variable indicates less support for regulation of pornography. Other variables coded as follows: sex (1=male, 2=female); children in household (1=yes, 2=no); religion (0=no religious affiliation, 1=any religious affiliation); Democrat (0=no, 1=yes); Republican (0=no, 1=yes); support for free expression (1=high, 4=low); exposure (1=none, 2=some); effect on self and others (1=large negative effect, 3=no effect, 5=large positive effect).

* $p<.05$
*** $p<.001$

Table 4. Regression coefficients predicting support for regulation of pornography, for third-person effect[a] subsample.

	Beta	Cumulative R^2	R^2 change	F (R^2 change)
Genetic				
Sex	-.20			
Age	-.09	.04	.04	9.26^{***}
Demographic				
Children	.05			
Education	.12			
Religion	-.20	.09	.05	7.47^{***}
Political				
Democrat	.03			
Republican	-.07	.10	.01	1.54
Other Factors				
Attitude toward Free Expression	-.31	.19	.09	40.12^{***}
Exposure to X-rated content	.21	.22	.04	16.65^{***}
Perc'd Effect on Self	.16	.25	.03	11.58^{***}
Perc'd Effect on Others	.30	.31	.06	32.01^{***}

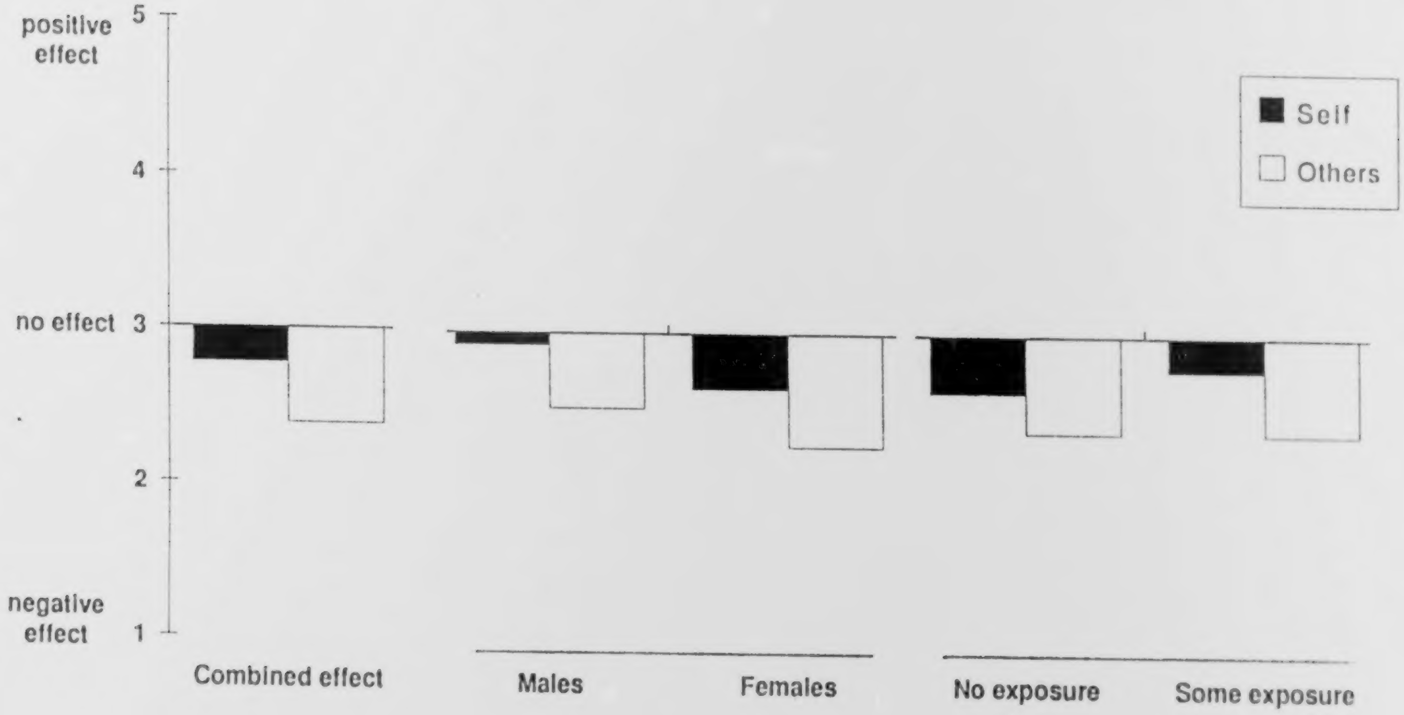
N=357

Note: Higher score on the dependent variable indicates less support for regulation of pornography. Other variables coded as follows: sex (1=male, 2=female); children in household (1=yes, 2=no); religion (0=no religious affiliation, 1=any religious affiliation); Democrat (0=no, 1=yes); Republican (0=no, 1=yes); support for free expression (1=high, 4=low); exposure (1=none, 2=some); effect on self and others (1=large negative effect, 3=no effect, 5=large positive effect).

[a] Only respondents who reported more negative effect on others than on self were included in this subsample.

*** $p<.001$

Figure 1. Mean estimates of effect of x-rated content on self and others



APPENDIX A

[Sample question sequence for (1) a female who indicated (2) some exposure to X-rated media content and was (3) randomly assigned to answer questions about effects on self before answering about effects on other people.]

Exposure

1. Now we have a few questions about a different topic -- the X-rated media content that is available these days. Some people purchase such X-rated material, while others come across it through friends or acquaintances. How often, if ever, have you seen or come across X-rated films or magazines? Would it be never, occasionally, somewhat often, or very often?

Perceived Effects

2. How do you think films or magazines with X-rated content affect your own moral values concerning sex? Do they have a positive effect, a negative effect, or no effect at all?

[IF NEGATIVE]
Would that be only a small negative effect or a large negative effect?

3. And how do you think films or magazines with X-rated content affect your own attitudes toward men? Do they have a positive effect, a negative effect, or no effect at all?

4. Now think for a moment about other people in general. How do you think films or magazines with X-rated content affect other people's moral values concerning sex? Is there a positive effect, a negative effect, or no effect at all?

5. How do you think films or magazines with X-rated content affect the attitudes of men in general toward women? Is there a positive effect, a negative effect, or no effect at all on the attitudes of men toward women?

6. And how do you think films or magazines with X-rated content affect the attitudes of women in general toward men? Is there a positive effect, a negative effect, or no effect at all on the attitudes of women toward men?

Support for restrictions

For the following statements, please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree.

7. I support legislation to prohibit the sale of pornographic materials.

8. Anyone who wants to have pornographic materials should be allowed to.

9. The government has more important things to do than regulate pornography.

10. We should have a panel to screen offensive material before it could be sold in this community.

Support for freedom of speech

[**]11. We should have NO restrictions on freedom of speech or expression in this country.

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[*] Each item concerning perceived effects was followed by an appropriate variation of this question (unless respondent answered "no effect at all").

[**] This Likert-scale item was placed in an unrelated section of the questionaire.

ALL THE NEWS THAT'S FIT TO SELL: SELECTION BIAS IN COMMERCIAL NEWS ORGANIZATIONS

by John McManus Ph.D.
Communication Department
Santa Clara University
Santa Clara, CA 95053
(408)-554-4911

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Abstract

As profit goals are pursued with increasing rationality in U.S. newsrooms, the conflict between norms of business and norms of journalism has become more evident. I argue that this conflict is not a question of editorial style or "serving the customers" journalism, but a fundamental ethical dilemma for journalism and for this society. A theoretical examination of business and journalism norms concludes that the market alone cannot be counted on to serve public information needs.

ALL THE NEWS THAT'S FIT TO SELL:
SELECTION BIAS IN COMMERCIAL NEWS ORGANIZATIONS

> If readers said they wanted more comics and less foreign news, in a market driven economy, I'm going to give them more comics and less foreign news.
>
> Wayne Ezell, editor at the Boca Raton News quoted in Washington Post 1/6/91

In describing how Knight-Ridder, the nation's second largest and perhaps most prestigious newspaper chain, redesigned its Florida paper, Ezell appears to take one side in a debate that began with the "Penny Press" a century and a half ago: Should editors choose news they think the public wants, or news they think the public needs to know? But something more may be happening. Ezell is justifying the substitution of non-news -- comics -- for news, albeit foreign news, with economic logic.

With increasing numbers of U.S. newspapers and television stations traded on Wall Street and owned by fewer and larger corporations than ever before, newsrooms across the country are operating with greater economic rationality (Bagdikian, 1990; Underwood, 1988; Bantz et al., 1980; McManus, 1990). Ezell's comment is alarming, however, because it suggests that even in the best chains there is now pressure to produce news that sells, regardless of whether it informs. When corporations that have been obsessed with Pulitzer-Prize-winning journalism become "obsessed with customers" -- Knight Ridder's new corporate ideal -- it is time to move the debate about the commodification of news from a matter of journalistic taste to a fundamental question of ethics.

In this paper I shall argue for rethinking this debate in terms of a conflict of interest. When a reporter accepts something of value from a source, the reporter enters a conflict of interest likely to lead to bias -- reporting that reflects what the source wants to hear rather than the truth. When a news organization chooses a policy of maximizing audience, it too enters a conflict of interest likely to lead to bias -- reporting that reflects what the public wants to hear rather than the truth. In both cases professional norms of news judgment are put at risk and the public good is threatened by private gain.

Perhaps because journalism's codes of ethics are aimed at individuals and not at news

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organizations[1], the first conflict of interest is universally condemned while the second is merely debated. I will argue, however, that selecting comics over foreign news, as well as the bizarre or colorful or emotional event over the consequential one introduces bias, even if each story reported is accurate. This is because the core principle of journalism, expressed in virtually every journalism code, is public enlightenment. The American Society of Newspaper Editors, for example, state as article I: "The primary purpose of gathering and distributing news and opinion is to serve the general welfare by informing the people and enabling them to make judgments on the issues of the time" (in Day, 1991:351). As long as a paper or broadcast claims itself as "news," a selection bias for the popular over the important violates this central ethic.

The Nature of the Conflict

Journalism ethics books normally describe conflicts of interest between journalists and sources or news organizations and advertisers. It may seem absurd to think of a conflict with the audience, particularly when every member of that audience has freely chosen to spend a quarter or his/her time in exchange for the "news." Microeconomic theory (and many news executives) say that in such a free transaction both sides win; utility is maximized (Main and Baird, 1981).

But there are important assumptions underlying microeconomic theory that often escape notice, notably: 1) that both sides to the transaction act rationally, rather than emotionally; 2) that the exchange takes place under conditions approximating perfect knowledge of both the product and the market; and 3) that there is competition in the market (Rotzoll and Haefner, 1990). The more of these conditions that are violated and the more seriously, the greater the likelihood that one party will take advantage of the other. This is because each transaction has an adversary as well as a cooperative dimension. Both sides try to get the most for the least (Main and Baird, 1981).

Because these three assumptions are the pillars holding up the notion that the organization that serves the public best makes the greatest profit, each deserves attention:

1) Do consumers act rationally? The classical economists' model of individuals capable of

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[1]. There is no allusion to corporate responsibility in the codes of ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists, the American Society of Newspaper Editors, or the Radio-Television News Directors Association. Instead the codes make constant reference to persons -- "journalists," "practitioners," and "members."

discerning their self interest and logically following it have been repeatedly punctured by empirical studies showing faults in reasoning strategies (Kahneman and Tversky, 1973; McGuire, 1981) as well as critical studies suggesting mass acceptance of whole systems of idea that inhibit the self interest of non-elites (Gramsci, 1971).

2) Do consumers have perfect knowledge of the news market and its products? Consumers are likely to know the local market; most newspapers and stations advertize their presence. But the very nature of the products offered in that market makes anything resembling perfect knowledge impossible. The consumption of news is necessarily based on trust because the subject of news is what we don't yet know. A wise consumer can kick the tires of a car and check the compression in the cylinders. The news consumer is rarely in position to compare the report of an event with his/her own experience of the event.

3) Do news consumers have a choice? At the national level there is increasing choice, particularly for cable subscribers who can access CNN and C-SPAN. At the local level, there is some competition among news organizations, particularly in the largest U.S. cities, but choice of news sources declines with population. Daily newspapers still compete only in a score of cities. For most Americans, the choice is between a local or regional newspaper and three or four television stations located in the dominant city of a metropolitan area. Compared to the volume of news produced by competing newspapers, competition among stations is limited.

In a market where many consumers act more on emotion than reason in purchasing a product, and that product is difficult to evaluate for quality, and the outlets for the product are few, any economic transaction becomes problematic. To understand where the consumer may be vulnerable we need a model of the news transaction. I propose this one:

Step 1 News Consumers $\underset{\text{information}}{\overset{\text{attention/money}}{\rightleftarrows}}$ News Providers

Step 2 News Providers $\underset{\text{money}}{\overset{\text{consumer attention}}{\rightleftarrows}}$ Advertisers

This double transaction is the economic foundation of commercial news production in the U.S. both broadcast and print (Picard, 1989). By itself, the model doesn't predict how news may be defined in a particular news organization. But it can be used to derive an economic theory of news selection that helps make clear where the demands of audience-maximization -- and more fundamentally, profit-maximization -- and the public demand for reliable information may conflict.

If the goal is to *maximize profit*, the model predicts that rational news providers should offer the least expensive mix of content that garners the largest audience advertisers will pay to reach. The size and wealth of the audience determine advertising revenues. These revenues comprise 100 percent of the income of broadcasters and 70-80 percent of newspapers' income (Udell, 1978).[2]

How might the goal of profit optimization affect news selection? First think of the production of news accounts as having three stages (McManus, 1988). If each of these stages is examined from a cost/benefit standpoint, a purely economic news selection theory might look like this:

The probability of an event becoming news is:	Inversely proportional to the cost of discovering the event has occurred, and...	Inversely proportional to the cost of assembling the event into a narrative, and...	Proportional to the expected appeal of the story to audiences advertisers will pay to reach.

If the goal of journalism is *public enlightenment*, there is potential for conflict with goals of profit-maximization. As Barney (1987) points out, the most important news is often the most expensive to discover because powerful interests want it hidden. Independent, particularly investigative, surveillance of a community is expensive. Likewise, the most important stories are likely to be complex, with many sources and sides. The reporter time -- and thus expense -- involved in gathering them may be greater than for other stories. Last, important stories may be dull, such as economic trends or political apportionment debates, or unpopular, such as stories that question accepted myths, fervently supported national policies (such as the recent war in the Persian Gulf) or popular leaders. To the extent that content that enlightens the public is expensive to learn of and report, and unpopular or boring for consumers, profit-maximization and journalism norms are likely to be in opposition.

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[2]. Newspapers and magazines earn the remainder of their income from subscriptions and over-the-counter sales, but pricing strategy conforms to the demand for a large audience because of advertising's greater contribution to revenues (Picard, 1989).

It is relatively simple to define the favor when a reporter accepts something of value from a source. The favor in a conflict of interest between a news organization and the public is more difficult to name since one has to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate profits. Such a distinction requires an ethical framework.

The utilitarian goal of journalism

The principal ethical codes of journalism follow what Siebert et al. (1956) call the "social responsibility" theory of the press. The theory was most clearly propounded by the Hutchins Commission. The Commission listed as the first "requirement" of the news media: "A truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning" (1947:21). The goal of such information, according to the Commission, was public empowerment through democratic processes, not the private gain of news organizations. Such a view is consistent with utilitarian ethics: "The 'socially responsible' course for a business to take is the one that will produce the greatest net benefits for society or impose the lowest net costs" (Velazquez, 1988:67). From the standpoint of utilitarian ethics, therefore, the goal of journalism is the most learning about the existence and import of current events for the most people.

Costs and Benefits

How might this utilitarian goal be realized in commercial news organizations, which must turn a profit in order to stay in business? This question should be answered across all three stages of news production,[3] but the focus here is the second stage, the selection of events for coverage.

To maximize learning in the context of a voluntary exchange in which consumers may choose news products as much or more for emotional as factual content, the overall mix of news content must be both appealing and informative. In a market economy, appeal is the necessary means to the end of informing; the news must attract our attention before we can learn from it.

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[3]. For an analysis of the first stage, see J. McManus, "How Local Television Learns What is News," Journalism Quarterly, vol 67, no. 4, Winter, 1990. The third stage is analyzed in J. McManus, "How Objective is Local Television News?," Mass Comm Review, in press.

What makes news content appealing? A synthesis of the "uses and gratifications" of news suggests that people consume news for two basic reasons: The first is primarily cognitive--to orient themselves to their environments. The second is primarily emotional--to be engaged in an entertaining, diverting or para-social way.[4] These two dimensions of news content--orientation and entertainment--suggest a way to analyze the ethics of decisions about which events to cover.

Although public attention may be attracted to news through either an expectation of orientation or entertainment, or both, the drawing power of these two dimensions is unequal. On routine news days, a particular story containing orientating information is likely to appeal to only a small segment of the public. A decision to close a school, raise property taxes or build a shopping center is likely to be important only for those directly affected. Events with orientation value across the hundreds of square miles of the typical circulation area of a newspaper or the signal of a station are not frequent enough to fill daily news programming. Entertainment generalizes far better. A powerful human interest story, or a bizarre turn of events, or the doings of celebrities, are likely to enjoy wide appeal, whether consumers gain understanding or not.

The conflict between the news organization's interest in maximizing public understanding of current events and its interest in maximizing return to investors originates in these two dimensions of news content. The orientation dimension has more journalistic value than commercial value. And the entertainment dimension has more commercial value than journalistic.

Since a newspaper or newscast could contain both entertaining and orienting stories, and indeed a single story could be both entertaining and orienting, separating the two dimensions may seem to be an unnecessary distinction. While few events are both entertaining and orienting, a skilled reporter can often broaden the interest in an orientating event by adding elements of entertainment.

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[4]. In a comprehensive review of "uses and gratifications" research, Wenner (1985) argues convincingly for a gratifications "map" with just two dimensions -- content and process gratifications. The first he describes as primarily cognitive activity: "message uses to gain knowledge, increase or reduce uncertainty in personal and social situations or support existing predispositions" (p. 173). Process gratifications are primarily affective: "consumption activities that take place apart from the content per se, and include a myriad of 'escape' uses, stimulation uses that often involve engagement in 'entertainment,' and uses combatting social isolation through connections with mediated culture and its actors" (p. 173). A two-dimensional view is also advanced by Finn (1983)-- "information-seeking and entertainment-seeking," and developed by Donohew et al. (1987).

The reverse is also true. But both types of additions usually come at a cost the profit-maximizing corporation may not wish to pay.

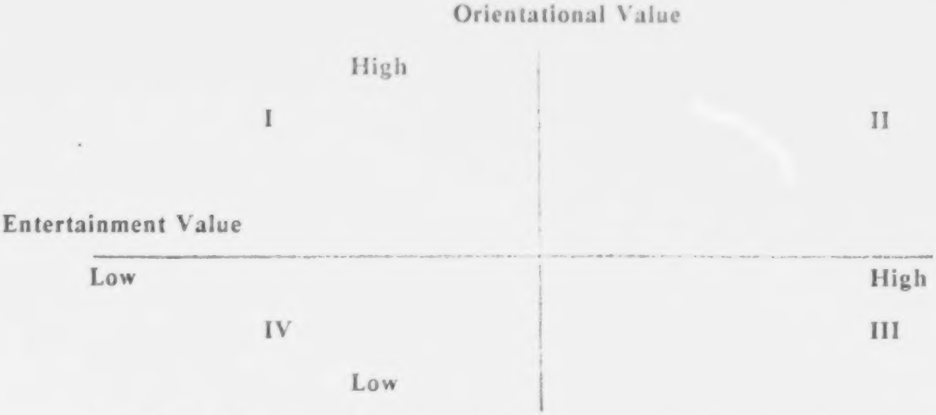
Let's consider the costs of orienting and entertaining stories separately at first. There is little research to guide us, so these generalizations are offered tentatively from my own experience as a reporter and from watching other journalists as a researcher. All else equal, orienting stories are likely to be somewhat more expensive both to learn of and report than entertaining ones. Because orienting events are often highly localized they require a greater network of journalists to uncover than entertaining events. Entertaining events are available in abundance by merely listening to the emergency dispatcher's radio calls for fire, ambulance and police assistance. Orienting stories are often about issues. They require background reporting, multiple sources, and more than one side must be gathered under objectivity norms. Entertaining stories are often about a single incident and the important sources are frequently in one place, at the scene.

Skill requirements for the two kinds of stories are more equal. It takes a sense of the dramatic to create entertaining stories, but it requires analytical ability and persistence to report orienting stories.

Now, let's consider the costs of adding entertainment to events that are primarily orientational, and vice versa. A dull school board or city hall story can be enlivened by contacting the citizens affected by council action for their reaction. In printed and radio media, such reactions can be gathered by phone. Television reporters, however, are likely to travel to citizen sources for pictures. The travel consumes both reporter and photographer time. There is a second cost that differs by technology. For broadcast media, lengthy stories that do justice both to the informational and entertaining sides of stories may drive away viewers uninterested in the subject. In print, uninterested readers, can bypass long stories of little personal interest without cancelling the paper.

Adding orientational content to reporting of a primarily entertaining event also costs time. Finding a pattern to give an isolated event, such as an accident, fire or murder, broader meaning may require checking records or talking to additional sources. For television and radio, these additional facts may lengthen the story enough to drive away consumers motivated by entertainment values.

With a general appreciation of both costs and benefits of reporting different kinds of events, we can evaluate the selection process for social and corporate benefit. Each event selected can be located on both the orientation and entertainment dimensions:[5]



Quadrant I: Events expected to yield content that is high in orientation value, but low in entertainment, i.e, important but dull. From the standpoint of utilitarian journalistic ethics, such choices are suboptimal, but defensible given scarce resources. From the standpoint of economics, however, such choices consume resources to cover, but generate little revenue due to small audiences.

Quadrant II: Events expected to yield content that is high both in orientation and entertainment value, i.e., interesting and important stories. Such choices are optimal in terms of journalistic ethics. These choices are also optimal in terms of consumer demand from an economic standpoint. However, content high both in orientation and entertainment is likely to consume more resources to produce than content high on a single dimension, or on neither.

Quadrant III: Events expected to yield content high in entertainment but low in orientation value, i.e., interesting, but unimportant stories. Such choices serve the moral goals of journalism only by attracting attention to Quadrant I and II content. From an economic standpoint, audiences for such stories are likely to rival those of quadrant II (some consumers may be driven away by the length of combining orientation and entertainment while others are attracted by the combination). Production costs of Quadrant III stories, however, are likely to be lower than for II.

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[5]. The orientation dimension might be operationalized by rating the intensity of two elements reporters call "news values." They are personal consequence and social consequence. The entertainment dimension might be measured by similar ratings of other news values such as human interest, unusualness, visual quality, topicality, humor, etc.

Quadrant IV: Events expected to yield content that is neither orienting nor entertaining. Such choices have no moral justification as journalism. From an economic standpoint, however, these stories are the least expensive to produce, and may serve as "filler" to extend programs or content over additional advertising spots.

To maximize public understanding a news organization should choose most events from Quadrant II, high in orientation and entertainment value; none from Quadrant IV, low in both; very few from Quadrant III, high in entertainment alone; and fill in with Quadrant I, high in orientation. To maximize profit, however, a news organization should choose the most events from Quadrant III; few or none from Quadrant I; some -- the least expensive -- from quadrant II; and fill in with Quadrant IV.

Note that events likely to yield content of which the public might disapprove may be high in orientation value, but have a negative entertainment value, i.e., consumers might shun them (and subsequently the source). These would fit quadrant I.

Conclusion

In an ideal market, where consumers act rationally in their self interest, enjoy a variety of news outlets, and can discern the quality of news products, one would expect that the same strategy that maximizes profit would maximize public enlightenment. But given the actual news market, the logic of maximizing return often conflicts with the logic of maximizing public understanding.

News is necessarily a commodity when produced by commercial corporations, but to be ethical from a utilitarian perspective, it must be something more than a commodity as well. It must observe public service norms, even though such observance almost inevitably reduces profits. Only when profits are too small to sustain the news organization -- the station, or newspaper, or larger corporation -- are decisions to subordinate journalism norms to profit norms ethical. Most media corporations are nowhere near that point of compromise. Despite declines in profitability, both broadcast and newspaper corporations are reporting profits about double the U.S. manufacturing average (Editor and Publisher, 1/5/91).

The inherent conflict between the logic of business and the logic of journalism should be profoundly troubling for those who consider reliable information necessary for proper operation of a democracy. As pressure for profits increases, the very definition of news is being challenged. And no counter-balancing force is in sight. Doctors, lawyers and engineers must meet professional standards of knowledge and service. Food, drugs, buildings, even scales are inspected by government for integrity. But the market alone is trusted to ensure the public gets the information it needs to make wise decisions in a world increasingly complex, interdependent and changing.

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THE CRACKED MIRROR:
AN IMPERFECT CASE OF
PRESS SELF-EXAMINATION

Fiona A.E. McQuarrie
PhD Program, Business
2-24 Faculty of Business Building
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
T6G 2R6
(403) 492-2361

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Fiona McQuarrie is a PhD candidate in organizational analysis, University of Alberta. Thanks to Tom Barrett for assistance.

THE CRACKED MIRROR:
AN IMPERFECT CASE OF PRESS SELF-EXAMINATION

In July, 1990, a controversy arose in the province of British Columbia, Canada, involving a set of audiotapes detailing an apparent abuse of power by the province's Attorney-General and a relationship between the Attorney-General and a member of the press. The controversy was covered extensively in local media. A discussion of relevant ethical issues is followed by an analysis of their coverage in the press. Recommendations are made for more effective handling of ethical issues by media organizations and more meaningful reporting of such issues.

Introduction

On July 10, 1990, Moe Sihota, a member of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, Canada, rose in the Legislature and tabled a set of audiotapes that documented an apparent abuse of power by Bud Smith, British Columbia's attorney-general. Thus began a controversy which would result in the resignations of Smith, one

The Controversy: What Happened?

When Sihota tabled the audiotapes in the Legislature, he did not reveal who made them or how they were obtained. Nevertheless, their content was severely damaging. Earlier in the year another cabinet minister, Bill Reid, had been the subject of a private prosecution, initiated by Sihota, over lottery funds which had been directed by Reid to a company owned by his former campaign manager. The basis for Sihota's private prosecution was his belief that Bud Smith, British Columbia's attorney-general and thus the person responsible for prosecutions, was stalling on charging Reid in hopes of protecting a fellow cabinet minister. Sihota's action was dropped for lack of evidence. The audiotapes Sihota presented, which appeared to have been made by monitoring radio transmissions from Smith's car radio-phone, chronicled Smith plotting with one of his department's senior officials how to discredit the lawyer representing Sihota in the failed private prosecution. Clearly, such action was inappropriate for the individual charged with the administration of justice in the province.

However, matters got thornier a few days after Sihota's revelations in the Legislature. Members of the legislative press gallery were told by an anonymous telephone caller to look under a car in the Legislature's parking lot. What they found was a second set of audiotapes chronicling calls made by Smith to Margot Sinclair, a television reporter and a member of the press gallery. The conversations on the tapes suggested that Smith and Sinclair had a friendship beyond their professional relationship, with Smith telling Sinclair he wanted "to hold [her] hand" and offering her a "strong arm", and Sinclair arranging to come over to Smith's apartment with a bottle of white wine. The conversation also included several cutting comments about colleagues in the government and in the press gallery. The two discussed Sinclair's stories prior to their broadcast, and Sinclair advised Smith on how to best present himself to the media. In the two days after the second set of tapes were "released", the three major newspapers in British Columbia (the Province, the Vancouver Sun, and the Victoria Times Colonist) ran summarized transcripts of both sets of tapes.

The immediate concern of most observers was the source of the tapes. Sihota initially refused to reveal his source, saying only that the person who gave him the tapes did not make the original tapes. This led to speculation (encouraged by the government) that Sihota, as a member of the opposition party, was trying to cover up illegal actions that might have been sanctioned by the opposition. Other observers questioned the legality of taping radio-phone conversations. Smith did not have a cellular phone, on which conversations are protected by Canadian communications law, but an in-car radio-phone which broadcast on a public radio frequency. There was also much concern about the role of Sinclair, although it should be noted that the conversations between herself and Smith did not contain any of the incriminating statements about Sihota's lawyer. Nevertheless, Sinclair, who had denied any impropriety prior to the release of the second set of tapes, took a leave of absence.

A few weeks later, Sihota revealed that his source for the tapes had been Debi Pelletier, a reporter with the Canadian Press wire service and a member of the legislative press gallery. Pelletier had obtained the tapes from Brian Graves, a former freelance radio reporter who had chanced upon Smith's car-phone transmissions while using a radio scanner and then began taping his conversations. Pelletier had given the tapes to her editors in Vancouver, but because of legal questions concerning the tapes' origins her editors decided not to pursue the story. However, Pelletier felt that Smith's conduct, as documented on the tapes, was unsuitable given his position in the government. She therefore arranged to meet with Sihota, one of the higher-profile members of the opposition party, and gave him the tapes which he subsequently made public. It was later revealed that Graves was not only the individual who had taped Smith's phone conversations but also the anonymous caller who guided the press gallery members to the second set of tapes.

Subsequent discord arose in the press gallery when a radio reporter, Kim Emerson, resigned from the press gallery executive, citing a clause in the press gallery constitution which required an ethics committee to be struck if allegations of unethical conduct were made against any press gallery member. Emerson had tried to interview Graves while wearing a concealed microphone, and had brought with him a television cameraperson who hid in the bushes outside Graves' apartment building and filmed the interview. Emerson claimed that he, Pelletier, Graves, and Sinclair should be investigated by a press gallery ethics committee.

The government's response to the revelations contained on the tapes was to call a commission of inquiry, headed by the provincial ombudsperson, into the lottery funds grant which sparked Sihota's private prosecution. The attorney-general of the neighbouring province of Alberta was also retained to determine if action should be taken against Smith. The commission of inquiry eventually found that there was no wrongdoing in the government's decision not to proceed with any prosecution of Reid, and the Alberta attorney-general recommended no action against Smith.

Smith resigned as attorney-general, although he remains as a member of the legislative assembly. It is generally agreed that his once promising political career was severely damaged by the controversy. Bill Stewart, the ministry official who discussed with Smith how to discredit Sihota's lawyer, also resigned from his job. Sihota's lawyer filed charges of unprofessional conduct against Smith with the Law Society of British Columbia, the body which licenses and regulates lawyers in the province. Sinclair resigned from her television job and issued a press release saying she did not wish to continue her career in journalism; she is now working for the Canadian federal government. Sinclair also suggested that she would be pursuing legal action for invasion of privacy, although no suit has yet been filed. There were also some suggestions that Graves would be charged with illegal monitoring of private conversations, although no charges have yet been laid. The press gallery has yet to strike an ethics committee to discuss the entire affair.

Ethics: What Should Have Happened?

As this summary of events shows, the "tapes" controversy was complex. It involved two sets of tapes, several members of the legislature, several members of the press gallery, and many ethical issues. Several contextual factors which were not directly relevant to the events at hand are also worth mentioning.

Victoria, British Columbia, where the Legislature is located, is a relatively small and quiet city, and consequently the 30-odd members of the legislative press gallery have strong social as well as professional links. While the press gallery has a formal constitution and an elected executive, it has no legal basis as an organization and in many respects acts as much as a social club as a professional group. In addition, it is not uncommon for gallery members to socialize with politicians or civil servants outside of work, occasionally in organized events such as baseball or basketball games.

The links between the press gallery and the government, however, go beyond social contact. The press gallery occupies offices in the Legislature that are provided at low rent ($100 a year) by the government, and also makes use of other government-subsidized services such as free long-distance phone lines and free office supplies. Some news organizations in the press gallery prefer to use their own phone lines and office supplies to maintain impartiality.

The links between press gallery members and between politicians and journalists have the potential to cause many ethical conflicts. One obvious example is that journalists may have to report on the activities of individuals they maintain a social relationship with. Another example is that press gallery members who serve on the gallery executive might have to report on a journalistic breach of ethics at the same time as overseeing press gallery action against a member - although, notably, members have rarely, if ever, been reprimanded.

The "tapes" controversy raised several ethical questions related to the press gallery and to more general issues, namely:

- How could reporters cover events in which they were involved, either directly or indirectly?
- Was it correct for the press gallery to accept free or subsidized facilities and supplies from the government?
- Was it correct for a former press gallery member to tape radio-phone conversations including potentially improper statements by a cabinet minister?
- Was it correct for newspapers to run transcripts of tapes obtained by questionable means?
- Was it correct for a press gallery member to give information to a member of the legislature, even after her editors had indicated they would not use the information?
- Was it correct for a press gallery member to maintain a close friendship with a politician and to informally advise him on media relations?
- Was it necessary or correct to release some tapes and transcripts which included evidence of a friendship between a member of the

press gallery and a member of the legislature, but which did not include any evidence of lawbreaking?

An examination of existing ethical codes and writing on journalistic ethics offers some vague guidance in these matters, but, as one writer explains, "codes of ethics are found in many organizations; the trouble is, they're often found in the bottom drawer"[2]. Likewise, "codes without teeth, without an agency to enforce them, tend to be most influential with those who are already behaving responsibly and ethically"[3]. For example,the Canadian Daily Newspaper Publishers Association's "Statement of Principles for Canadian Daily Newspapers" states that "the newspaper should hold itself free of any obligation save that of fidelity to the public good. It should pay the costs incurred in gathering and publishing the news"[4]. Thus, presumably, the press gallery members should refuse gratuities from the government; to date, there have been few moves to do so.

On the other hand, the CDNPA code also states, "There are inevitable conflicts between the right to privacy and the public good or the right to know about the conduct of public affairs. Each case should be judged in the light of common sense and humanity"[5]. This principle, if applied to Sinclair's conduct, might suggest that her actions were more suitably judged by her employer and not by the public or other members of the press. In reference to a similar case - that of Laura Foreman, a former Philadelphia Inquirer reporter who was fired from the New York Times after it was discovered that she had had an affair with a Philadelphia politician - H. Eugene Goodwin commented, "The codes of ethics of national journalism organizations do not have much to say about the kind of source relationship that Foreman got involved with...nor do many of the codes of individual media specifically discuss entanglements with news sources"[6].

The question of Pelletier's access to the tapes and her subsequent release of them to Sihota is another situation in which codes of ethics offer little guidance. One journalism textbook suggests that "if ownership has decided not to publish or broadcast it, the reporter is generally considered to have no more right to use it for private purposes than the hired trainer of a race horse has a right to enter the horse in a race" but "information growing out of government activities, however, is almost always public property"[7]. Thus, a further question arises: did Pelletier have the right to pass on the tapes after her employer refused them, or was she right in doing so because the tapes related to government activity? Again, existing codes of ethics offer little guidance.

One issue underlying many of the questions resulting from the controversy is that of conflict of interest. Many of the reporters in the press gallery were already in a potential conflict of interest situation by accepting indirect subsidies from the government. When the controversy came to light, the same reporters covered events relating to people - other press gallery members and politicians - who they knew socially. Some reporters who served on the press gallery executive were also placed in the position of having to coordinate the gallery's public reaction to the events, and thus became subjects of stories themselves. Most codes of ethics are clear on conflict of interest matters: reporters should avoid situations that are or appear to be conflicts of interest[8]. However, it is unlikely that those formulating such codes ever envisioned an ethical situation as complicated as this.

Thus, newspapers covering the controversy were faced, in the words of one editor, with "choices - and the public interest. These choices may have been ethical and legal, but they were dominated by one imperative: what was the public interest?"[9] This statement is debatable in that no "public interest" other than scandal value seems to have been considered in printing some of the material from the tapes, but it does highlight the difficulty of making decisions in coverage of the controversy.

The Coverage: What Actually Happened?

Since the media were faced with questions regarding the conduct of their own reporters in this controversy, the Southam electronic database was searched to ascertain how newspapers explained the controversy's ethical issues to their readers and/or justified or commented on their own behaviour in the affair. The Southam database covers 15 Canadian daily newspapers, including the two Vancouver dailies. A total of 22 stories were obtained from the search: 11 from the Vancouver Sun, eight from the Vancouver Province, two from the Ottawa Citizen, and one from the Montreal Gazette.

Interestingly, the newspapers within British Columbia (the Province and the Vancouver Sun) continued to rely on their regular press gallery reporters for the majority of day-to-day coverage of the news events in the controversy - the same reporters who were, to a greater or lesser degree, associated with the controversy through their membership in the press gallery. The electronic media also continued relying upon their regular legislative staff. This led to the rather unusual phenomenon of reporters interviewing each other and chasing each other down the halls of the Legislature for quotes while politicians stood by bemusedly. To its credit, however, the Vancouver Sun removed its bureau chief, the press gallery president, from the story once he was required to speak for the press gallery in the affair.

Upon examination of the 22 stories dealing with ethical issues, it became apparent that the majority of discussion appeared in editorials and in commentary by columnists assigned to the Legislature. The Vancouver Sun ran three news stories, two editorials, and two columns on the controversy's ethics; the Province ran two news stories, three editorials, and four columns. The Ottawa and Montreal newspapers ran one news story each, and the Ottawa newspaper also ran an editorial.

The news stories on ethical issues took one of two angles: interviewing members of the press gallery who were not directly implicated in the controversy, or interviewing outside "experts". In stories quoting press gallery members, comments such as "There are different relationships between all three groups [the government, the opposition party, and the media] and everything that is pouring out in a torrent (about these relationships) looks really slimy"[10] were common. Ironically, one press gallery member quoted as saying "There is nothing secret in public lives and nothing remains secret"[11] was later discovered to be receiving money from the governing party for interviewing cabinet ministers on a cable television show.

Most press gallery members intervived also expressed ambivalence over ethical issues, saying that while they considered some forms of behaviour (such as outside friendships with politicians) questionable, the realities of covering the Legislature often meant that behaviour which might be considered unethical in other situations was not condemned. They also expressed personal regrets that colleagues and friends were involved in the controversy.

The majority of press gallery interviews were conducted with the three members of the press gallery executive, who commented on general ethical guidelines for reporters and what action the press gallery, as an organization, planned to take in regard to the affair. The press gallery members still present who were directly implicated in the controversy refused to be interviewed.

The "experts" interviewed in other stories came from three areas of expertise: general ethics, journalism ethics, and law. The ethical experts generally agreed that Sihota and Pelletier made the right decision to release the tapes in a difficult situation: a journalism professor remarked, "It seems to me that if there is any good reason to believe the attorney-general is interfering with the normal course of justice, this should be reported by any reporter who has access to authentic, credible data"[12]. However, two ethical experts and two lawyers questioned the manner in which the tapes were made, citing issues of privacy. It was also noted that telecommunications law in Canada outlaws distribution of information obtained from cellular telephone conversations, but is unclear on the status of information from radio-telephone calls. Brian Jennings, a Toronto lawyer, said that the taping of radio-telephone calls "is open to grave abuse....If a reporter can do it, then so can the police, so can anyone else."[13]

There was division on the issue of whether newspapers should have run transcripts of the tapes and electronic media should have broadcast excerpts. Rod Goodman, the ombudsperson of the Toronto Star, felt that the "sleaze factor" involved in the story would increase public mistrust of the media, while the managing editor of the Ottawa Citizen felt that the media "should err on the side of disclosure" in cases where the public interest was involved.[14]

Conspicuously absent from the news stories were comments from the editors involved in planning coverage of the controversy. One of only two editors interviewed was Jim Poling, editorial vice-president at Canadian Press and one of the executives who decided that Debi Pelletier, the first journalist to obtain the tapes, could not use them as the basis for news stories. The other was Mike McRanor, executive editor of the Vancouver Sun. Poling defended his decision in these words: "We have lots of regrets over the coverage, but when lawyers say you could face criminal charges, you can't go with the story."[15] And McRanor, explaining his decision to run transcripts of the tapes, said, "This is not a question of morality. This is a question of conduct and behaviour....Their private life is their own until it crosses over, when it becomes a public interest - and I think that's what it was."[16] A somewhat belated editor's comment came several months after the fact from Nicholas Hills, editor-in-chief of the Vancouver Sun, who wrote an op-ed article on the controversy and the news choices involved. He concluded, "In the end, I believe it is the public good and the publi interest that is paramount. And whatever your definition is of this, you may have to challenge legal precedent, and even make new law, to sustain your principles."[17]

Editorial writers and columnists centered their comments around Bud Smith's questionable conduct in his position as a high-ranking government official. Only three of the columns and editorials reviewed dealt directly with the ethical issues surrounding the press's role in the controversy. The Ottawa Citizen observed that "the spectacle being played out in British Columbia over close relationships between journalists and politicians is an offensive testimony to the craft....Yet it is not difficult to see how lines become blurred and ethics become obscured. Combating it is just as difficult."[18] The Citizen suggested that professional journalism associations and media organizations should require reporters to inform employers of potential conflicts and let the news organizations decide on appropriate action.

The Vancouver Province saw the controversy as a "valuable chance [for the press gallery] to draw something constructive....The press has no need to beat its breast before the public, but neither should it reject a public debate where the ethical issues involved can be aired....At least the public will get a look into a world from which it is frequently isolated."[19] And Province columnist Brian Kieran, a member of the press gallery executive, wrote, "For those of us in the gallery, the coming weeks will be ones of soul-searching under the weight of this albatross. For me...I have never taken so little pleasure in writing a column. I hope I never have to do it again."[20]

Discussion: What Didn't Happen?

The controversy, as has been shown, raised complex ethical issues which were not easily resolvable by reference to either established codes of journalistic practice or to existing law. Many of these ethical issues involved the conduct of journalists, and the coverage reviewed discussed in great detail the flaws in Smith's and Sinclair's conduct. However, there was a notable lack of explanations of the newspapers' own relationship to the politicians in the Legislature and the newspapers' own choices in arranging day-to-day coverage of the controversy - which suggests, at the very least, some self-serving selectivity in deciding which ethical issues were debatable and which were better left undiscussed.

Ironically, the issue of the press occupying subsidized office space and using subsidized supplies and telephone lines had been raised a few weeks before the controversy by none other than Bud Smith, who insinuated that his constituents had been asking him about the press gallery's operations. Columnist Brian Kieran called Smith's comments "fatuous", pointing out that subsidies made it possible for smaller newspapers to maintain legislative bureaux and suggesting that Smith's remarks were actually motivated by a desire to deflect attention from press questions about cabinet ministers' use of government airplanes.[21] Yet the newspaper coverage reviewed paid almost no attention to the broader issue of the press gallery's relationship to the members of the Legislature - not only in terms of the financial relationship, but also in terms of the social and professional ties between journalists and politicians. Only one story[22] discussed such activities as the weekly press vs. politicians basketball game and described the ties that develop over time between the press gallery, the government, and the opposition.

While these issues are perhaps not as directly relevant to the "public interest" as potential abuses of power by a cabinet minister, it nevertheless seemed somewhat hypocritical of the newspapers involved to comment negatively on the "unethical" conduct of other media members while ignoring larger ongoing ethical issues that they themselves were involved with. It could be argued that the "public interest" would be better served by placing the Smith-Sinclair controversy in the larger context of press-politician relations, where ethical standards were tenuous at best, rather than portraying the controversy as an unexplainable aberration of behaviour.

The articles reviewed also did not comment to any great extent on the newspapers' own choices in covering the controversy, beyond raising the motherhood issue of "public interest". One example demonstrates the questionable choices that were made but not publicly discussed. The Vancouver Sun's bureau chief in Victoria, Keith Baldrey, was, like everyone else in the press gallery, a social acquaintance of Sinclair's. He was also president of the press gallery, which meant he was involved in internal gallery disputes over members' behaviour; furthermore, in his role as bureau chief, he was in charge of coordinating the majority of coverage of the controversy. As mentioned, as soon as Baldrey became spokesperson for the gallery, he was taken off the story, which was a wise decision. However, this meant that the Sun was short an experienced reporter in Victoria; despite the fact that several reporters in the Vancouver newsroom had experience at the Legislature, no additional reporters were dispatched to Victoria, which undoubtedly affected the quality of coverage of the controversy.

Most media organizations, however, let their regular reporters in Victoria continue covering the controversy. While this choice could be justified on the basis that those regular reporters were thoroughly familiar with the Legislature and its inhabitants, and thus would do a better job than a reporter who was parachuted in, the question still remains whether these reporters, because of their social and professional connections, were the best choice as the primary sources of news on the controversy. If the "public interest" were truly being considered, particularly in such an ethically sensitive situation, the assignment of a reporter who did not regularly cover the Legislature would have done much to reinforce public confidence in the media. It should be noted that the two most thorough and questioning stories on the controversy's ethical issues, among the 22 reviewed, appeared in newspapers outside the province of British Columbia. Possibly editors and reporters who were not directly involved with the controversy were more willing to explore the issues in real depth and had less to lose by doing so.

An issue related to "public interest" is that of public confidence in the media. The choices which newspapers made in their coverage were generally not well explained to their readers, and when explanations were offered they were so superficial as to make the reader wonder if they had been concocted after the fact or had been that poorly thought through at the time the decisions were made. The most prevalent theme in the comments by Vancouver Sun representatives was, as mentioned, "public interest"; however, this was hard to reconcile with three pages of transcripts which highlighted exchanges like Smith telling Sinclair "I want to hold your hand". To its credit, the Sun did give considerable attention to the more serious asepcts of Smith's behaviour, but this was tainted somewhat by their obsession with the more salacious aspects of the controversy. More thoughtful and more frequent explanations of choices in coverage would have allowed newspaper readers to assess the extent of the complex ethical issues involved and made the overall coverage of the controversy more meaningful.

Conclusion: What Might Happen?

If nothing else, this case provides excellent grounds for discussion of media ethics, and is a prime example of the difficult ethical decisions which face reporters and editors. It is particularly valuable as an example of ethical choices, because ethical issues arise at all levels: individual behaviour, organizational decisions, service to the public, and short- and long-term journalistic practices. Sadly, as a practical, real-life example it also shows the shortcomings of ethical guidelines for everyday journalistic practice, where decisions are not always black and white but most often grey. And, despite the furore over ethics which it raised, it shows how little things can change despite intensive review.

Perhaps the controversy will, in the long run, make members of legislative press galleries more cautious in how they conduct their business. Yet it is questionable whether, in this instance, media audiences are any better informed about how news is generated from the legislature. The lack of in-depth explanation of ethical issues left readers with the impression that this particular press gallery was a snakepit totally lacking in ethics and unwilling to correct itself. This is, thankfully, far from the truth, but it is safe to say that public confidence in the press gallery was damaged and may take some time to be restored.

Other media can learn from this example by being forthright with their audiences about ethical issues and giving the reasons for choices made in coverage; even if the explanations and choices are controversial, presenting them makes the medium appear respectful of its readers' feelings and confident in its ability to cover news in a trustworthy manner.

It is unclear, however, if any long-term attempts will be made as a result of this controversy to establish codes of ethics which would be more relevant, or even whether such codes would be of any use at all. Perhaps a more realistic option that could be considered by all media struggling with ethical issues would be for media organizations to mandate (or require) staff to report any possible conflict-of-interest or other ethically questionable situations, with a mutually agreeable resolution to be subsequently determined. Such a course of action might be more effective than an established code of ethics for two reasons: 1) it puts the onus on the staff member to be aware of the ethical implications of his or her actions, and 2) it allows for decisions in individual situations, rather than attempting to develop language broad enough for every contingency - essentially, an impossible task.

No matter what the organization's stance on ethics is, however, this particular case also demonstrated the importance of organizations supporting their employees in ethical choices that are made. Even though Debi Pelletier bypassed her editors by giving the tapes to Moe Sihota, her employer supported her once her actions became public. Such a show of confidence in ethical choices does much to build public faith in the media.

While the ending to this controversy is rather sad, both for the individuals involved and for the public, it is hoped that some good can come of it by discussing the issues raised and using them as guidance in further ethical decisions. Ethics are never easy to determine or apply in decisions by individual journalists or by organizations; it is only through honest discussion and exchange within the media and between the media and its audiences that ethics can continue to be relevant and the media can continue to be perceived as a trustworthy source of information.

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The Media and Covenant House: Did the Dream End in a Nightmare?

Phyllis Zagano
Boston University

In December, 1989, the roof fell in on Covenant House, a non-profit child care agency incorporated in New York in 1972 by Rev. Bruce Ritter, O.F.M.Conv. Widespread press reports of allegations of sexual misconduct by Father Ritter, made by a young man who said he had gone to Covenant House for counseling and assistance, attacked the organization at its heart. The story gained wide media coverage and appeared to toll a death knell for the organization, which by 1989 had locations in 15 cities (including in 4 Latin American countries), approximately 1,700 employees and a budget of nearly $85 million. Throughout its history, Father Ritter was its principal spokesman and chief fund raiser. Legally, he was the "sole member" of the corporate structure; in fact, he was much more. Covenant House and Father Ritter were inseparable.

This paper discusses the widespread media coverage of Covenant House from December, 1989, when the story broke in the New York Post to August, 1990, when a report contracted for by Covenant House was released to the general public. It follows the agency's attempts to manage the media crisis, presents a professional discussion of the ultimate nightmare for a non-profit agency, and makes some suggestions for the future of non-profit crisis communications.

I. The Problem

The New York papers on Monday, December 11, 1989 were full of reports of homosexual activists disrupting the 10:15 a.m. Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral, which had been celebrated by the Roman Catholic Archbishop of New York, John Cardinal O'Connor. The protesters shouted, demonstrated, and flung consecrated hosts to the Cathedral floor, all in opposition to the Cardinal's past pronouncements against homosexual activity.[1] Homosexuality had been much in the news in New York, due to the Cardinal's opposition to the distribution of condoms in schools or in Catholic social agencies, and his restating of Catholic teaching against homosexual activity. Some months prior, in January, 1989, homosexual activists disrupted a public lecture at St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Manhattan delivered by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for Doctrine of the Faith, who had recently signed a Vatican teaching statement on sex and sexuality. While other matters may have appeared to be in doubt in the public print, two things were clearly outlawed by official Catholicism -- abortion and homosexual activity -- and each had its share of demonstrators.[2]

It is on this canvas that the picture of Bruce Ritter was first drawn by an exclusive story in the New York Post, "DA Probing Rev. Ritter, Former male prostitute charges 25G rip-off of Covenant House funds."[3] The first story did not charge sexual impropriety, but the innuendo was clearly there: "Although the probe has been characterized as the early stage of a 'frauds' investigation, it is being spearheaded by Linda Fairstein, the well-known chief of the DA's Sex Crimes Unit."[4] Soon the Post published more: "The youth has told investigators that a 'personal relationship' existed between him and the 62-year-old Franciscan priest, The Post has learned."[5]

The story was shaping up. While it appeared to be one of fiscal irresponsibility, the reason for the irresponsibility seemed to be the sexual involvement of Rev. Bruce Ritter and a young runaway who first approached Ritter in the Covenant House New Orleans facility. While Covenant House officials, and Ritter himself, were denying any special relationship between Ritter and the New Orleans runaway,[6] sides began to form in the media battle. There were essentially two camps: those who believed that the runaway was telling the truth, that he had been sexually involved with Ritter and had received special financial considerations for his favors; and they who saw this as the latest in a number of attempts to discredit the Catholic Church, especially in the areas of fiscal and sexual impropriety.

As the story continued to trickle out, some Covenant House employees and board members responded to news inquiries by defending the organization's founder.[7] Others remained silent as the City's two tabloid newspapers ran stories with the headlines "Ritter's accuser wired by DA"[8] "Ritter °cooperating'"[9] and "TAPE WAS ROLLING -- Father Ritter didn't know former male hooker was wearing a wire."[10] Still others supplied positive support, such as

John Cardinal O'Connor, who told the New York Post "In all my personal association with Father Ritter and those that work with him, I have seen nothing but self-sacrifice and commitment to the most abandoned in our society."[11] and Newsday columnist Dennis Duggan, who called him "A Good Man Smeared With Rumor's Mud."[12]

Through the week the story churned on radio, television and in daily newspapers. While the accusations came early in the week, it was not until Thursday, December 14, 1989 that Ritter went before cameras to deny them. And he did so, "categorically." The evening newscasts of December 14, 1989 and the morning newspapers of December 15, 1989 painted the tale in larger-than-life letters. And that seemed to be for the good. By now, Ritter appeared to be the beleaguered victim of some paranoid delusions. His accuser was a former male prostitute who had been taken into Covenant House, New Orleans, moved to New York, given housing and an opportunity at education, all by Father Ritter, whose saving hand he was now biting. The priest was quoted on the front page of the New York Daily News: "RITTER; IT'S BEEN HELL."[13], and stories which tended to support his denials ran in virtually every New York paper[14], with the notable exception of the Post, which first broke the scandal.

The Post was simply not letting go. While other papers ran photos of Ritter denying any and every part of the scandal, the Post ran a photo of a motel in Pennsylvania where the priest admitted staying with his young accuser. The Post said

> Ritter confirmed that he and [the young man] also spent several weekends alone at a private

> guest house on the Hudson River in Rhinebeck and that they spent a night at the same hotel room at The Inn at Reading after a staff member's wedding last June....Ritter called the trips an error in judgement and understands how they created a questionable appearance, but says there was no violation of Covenant House guidelines because [the young man] was in a special program.[15]

The "special program" to which Ritter alluded was the "safe-house" program, which Ritter said was established for especially troubled youth, including those whose lives were in danger because of their past connections with organized crime as prostitutes or as drug runners or as both. The priest's accuser fell into this category, and the Post said that while 25,000 young people are counseled nationwide each year, only three were in the safe-house program. The other two were not identified.

As the story spread across the country, especially to cities where Covenant House had satellite operations,[16] John Cardinal O'Connor put the force of his position behind Ritter, noting "It's a cynical age we live in and he's in a highly vulnerable occupation."[17] The Daily News put a different spin on the same Cathedral press conference, saying that "O'Connor said a church court would convene if criminal charges are lodged against Ritter."[18]

The story spread to news magazines of every stripe, from Newsweek to the Village Voice to Outweek, which calls itself "New York's Lesbian and Gay News Magazine."[19] Things seemed to be looking up when the New York Times and others ran a story "Priest's Accuser Is Called a Liar By His Father," and the name the young man had been using turned out to be an alias, albeit one supplied by Covenant House.[20] The dogged Post, however, the next day ran a story headed "Dad: I Didn't Know of Son's Nights With Fr. Ritter,"[21] and followed on Christmas eve with "Another Ritter Bombshell, Priest Hit With New Sex Charge," detailing charges made by a second former male prostitute who claimed a sexual relationship with Ritter twenty years earlier.[22] The Post was reporting on a story in the Village Voice which detailed the allegations of a second young male whom the author said he interviewed four years prior. Apparently missing that point, Covenant House's Senior Vice President for Communications at the time, John Kells, characterized the second charges as copied from the first. Meanwhile, the Village Voice article detailed sexual activity between Ritter and this second young man. There may have been no malice aforethought, but even the advertising surrounding the Voice piece seemed to be wisecracking. Next to a photograph of Ritter in a clerical collar and suit receiving and award from President George Bush, a full length Levelor Blinds ad asked in high type: "What's Black and White and 60% Off?"[23]

By early February the Post was once again accusing Covenant House of improprieties. The New Orleans ex-prostitute, whose father had called him a liar and who admitted to having used an alias supplied by Covenant House, received his Covenant House alias under strange circumstances. Evidently, Covenant House connections supplied him with a new, but fraudulent, baptismal certificate,a birth certificate, and applications for a social security card and passport. The baptismal and birth records were of an upstate New York boy who died in 1980 at the age of 10. This was the new identity provided by Covenant House.[24]

Matters did not improve for Father Ritter, whose religious order initiated in investigation into the allegations of a third former Covenant House resident, who by then was a 31-year-old social worker from Ithaca, New York.[25] Now the priest, whom the Village Voice called "a moralizing homophobe,"[26] had at least three accusers, two of whom were present and accounted for, while the third had disappeared. The day the New York Times broke the story of the Franciscan investigation, the order directed him to take a leave of absence. Ritter did so, but issued a statement:

> I am profoundly saddened by the allegations against me and the need to deny them constantly. I have no way of proving my innocence. My accusers cannot establish my guilt. I devoutly hope the inquiries under way will bring an end to this incredibly painful chapter in my life.[27]

The same day the bad got even worse. A fourth man, a 33-year-old president of a financial consulting firm, accused Ritter of engaging him in a sexual relationship over a period of six years, beginning in 1975.[28] The third accuser had said his sexual relationship with Ritter lasted approximately one year, beginning in 1973. The second accuser had said his relationship with Ritter continued intermittently from 1973 to 1986. The first accuser, the New Orleans ex-prostitute, had spoken of relatively contemporary events.

II. The Solution

For Covenant House, part of the problem turned out to be part of the solution. The leave of absence imposed upon Ritter by his Franciscan superiors effectively cut the public link between the youth agency and the priest. Without doubt the in-house public relations staff were responsible for some of the editorials and columns which appeared nearly concurrently with the "Ritter Resigns" stories. The theme which developed was: "Ritter may have a problem, but the kids still need help, so don't take it out on the kids."

Numerous columns and editorials reverberated with that advice. Newsday's Murray Kempton asked, "...if Covenant House cannot be salvaged for work half as great as his [Ritter's] has been, where are the lost or thrownaway young to turn?"[29] as his Newsday colleague Dennis Duggan reminded readers that Ritter had denied the allegations to him personally and, no matter what, Ritter did start an organization which did take care of thousands of young people who had no where else to turn.[30] A Newsday editorial declared "Whatever the outcome, Covenant House deserves and needs continued support. Thousands of troubled kids have come to depend on the organization that Ritter founded. We can't afford to turn them away."[31] And the New York Times editorialized: "...if he [Ritter] is tarnished by the allegations, Covenant House must not be."[32]

The Covenant House board quickly appointed board member Frank

J. Macchiarola, a former New York City Schools Chancellor, to temporarily head the agency, and it appeared that Covenant House was heading for better times.[33] It appealed to the working-class backbone of its local contributor base through an ad in the Daily News, which reminded readers of all the good the agency had done and that "This work cannot continue without you."[34] Even the Post, the paper which broke the story, reminded readers "that these are only investigations. We would urge them to remember all the good Covenant House has done."[35] The Daily News urged a "quick and truthful resolution to this mess."[36]

Some of the attempts to re-spin the story to Covenant House's advantage paid off to a certain extent, although there is always the problem of repeating the bad news even in a good news story. The preponderance of the next set of stories focussed on Covenant House clients complaining about the bad press and asking why the media did not center on all the good things Ritter and his organization had accomplished.[37]

Such efforts did not touch the Post, which headlined that "Covenant House is Accused of Stalling Probe" in mid-February,[38] shortly before the New York Times disclosed that the priest and lawyer involved in procuring false identity papers for the New Orleans ex-prostitute said they did so at the express behest of Father Ritter, and with his full knowledge.[39] Two weeks later, both Ritter and Covenant House's acting president Frank J. Macchiarola quit. As the New York Times reported, Macchiarola "advocated a program of discovery and remedial action," and, "Mr.

Macchiarola said Father Ritter also made a presentation before °the board voted against my expressed course of action.'"[40] Apparently, Ritter preferred that James J. Harnett, his long-time aide, take over while the board searched for a Roman Catholic clergyman to replace Ritter. Meanwhile, the Manhattan District Attorney announced that no criminal charges would be brought against Ritter despite what it termed "some questionable financial transactions,"[41] which were most probably the same questionable loans made by Ritter to members of the board and of his own family later investigated by the New York State Attorney General.[42]

Things were not particularly good for Ritter. He was under investigation by the Franciscans, had apparently turned his leave of absence from Covenant House into a permanent resignation after striking a deal to avoid prosecution, and had hidden over $1 million in Covenant House funds in a tax-exempt vehicle called the Franciscan Charitable Trust which he had incorporated five years earlier without the order's knowledge.[43] Even so, he had his defenders. Among the last was the conservative bi-weekly magazine National Review, which put itself in the curious position of equating clerical pederasty with extra-marital affairs, when it wrote

> Father Ritter has run Covenant House by putting himself and his colleagues on the line, emotionally and financially, over and over again. For years, he has spent his days wrestling for souls in a hell few of us can even imagine. If it turns out that, along the way, he has fallen over the line, it will be interesting to see if his lapses are treated as indulgently as those of, oh, certain senators.[44]

The New York Times reported on March 9, 1990 that Ritter's tax-exempt trust had not filed annual reports with the government, as required.[45] But even with Ritter divorced from the agency, the news accounts of problems within Covenant House continued. The same day the Times reported problems with Ritter's private tax-exempt charity, both the Post and the News headlined stories about "haphazard" management and serious program problems within Covenant House. Each quoted a Covenant House study of its "Under 21 New York" program, which found the program top-heavy with white managers to serve a minority population, disorganized, haphazard and confused in its method of referring runaways for help and shelter.[46]

The next day the Archdiocese of New York publicly stepped in to help:

> John Cardinal O'Connor called the tangled affairs of Covenant House a "mess" yesterday and said the Archdiocese of New York was acting to rescue the organization by helping to find a new interim president.[47]

The Cardinal continued to defer action or comment on Ritter's alleged activity to the Franciscans:

Cardinal O'Connor, as he has done previously, expressed support for Father Ritter:

> "I will continue to believe in Father Ritter's personal integrity," he said. "No one has given me reason to believe to the contrary." But the Cardinal said he had deliberately avoided learning the details of the allegations of sexual misconduct, which he said he had not discussed with Father Ritter and which are under investigation by the Franciscan order.
>
> "At this point, its almost not a matter

> of guilt or innocence," he said, "It's a matter of public perception."[48]

The public perception had reached its nadir. The agency, still reeling from the allegations of sexual and fiscal improprieties, now had the growing specter of mismanagement and unorthodox methodology to contend with. The very day the Cardinal expressed his concern about "public perception" in the Times, an Op-Ed piece in the same paper by the head of a youth advocacy organization accused Ritter and Covenant House of unorthodox policies and fraudulent fund-raising measures. He pointed out that the Times Square, Houston and Toronto shelters were the bane of local police, because they served as flop houses for street-hardened youth who had no apparent will to reform or change their lives. In addition, he said that while the $31 million spent to raise approximately $90 million[49] focussed on blond blue-eyed corn-fed runaways, Federal statistics note that only 12% of runaways become involved in prostitution and fewer than 15% cross state lines. The preponderance of Covenant House clientele whom the 800,000 contributors aided annually were tough minority males, not poster boys led astray by the big city.[50]

Aside from that Op-Ed piece, there were relatively few pieces which charged Covenant House with being anything more than an agency beset with the woes of its founder. The public relations effort appeared to center on the fact that there was an investigation by the Franciscans, and a new one ordered by the board to be headed by former New York City Police Commissioner Robert J. McGuire, now of the private investigating firm, Kroll

Associates.[51] One news blip spoke of a rape within one of the agency buildings,[52] but efforts managed to keep the heat on Ritter and off the agency. The official policy seemed to be one of "we did not know that Ritter was doing that," no matter what the "that" was. Still, the announcing of Ritter's resignation and the official inquiries by his order and by the board were not enough to ward off a New York Times editorial which complained, "Covenant House, Still Unswept," and called for a new board of directors and an overhaul in its methodology:

> Every day the news about Covenant House grows grimmer. And every day, therefore, it becomes more urgent to reassure the conscientious citizens whose contributions support the organization. The survival of Covenant House requires a wholly new board of directors....If the opinions of child-care experts are worth anything, Covenant House may need an overhaul of its methodology along with its management. But none of that will matter much if the public withdraws its confidence and its money.[53]

The Cardinal soon announced that he would personally name a Roman Catholic priest as interim president of the agency, as well as the top three managers, and "that some of the associates he would appoint might also be members of the clergy -- priest, nuns or brothers -- and that at least one would be a woman."[54] The interim professionals would not be paid by Covenant House, but would received their usual stipends from the Archdiocese.[55]

It appeared that at this time the real solution began to develop, both inside and outside the Covenant House walls. While the Covenant House Senior Vice President for Communication, John Kells, remained on staff until early March of 1991, Ray O'Rourke of Burson-Marsteller had advised the board on public relations through January and February. Kells, as the Village Voice insinuated, may indeed have been part of the problem. He joined Covenant House as Ritter's press secretary in 1985 at the age of 25 at an annual salary of $90,000. The Voice alleged he created a no-show job for his roommate and that he relied on highly-paid counsel to supply public relations expertise before he "resigned."[56]

Meanwhile, board member Mark Stroock, a retired Senior Vice President of the Manhattan advertising agency Young and Rubicam, helped with public relations through the winter, until late March.[57] Professional public relations efforts centered on two points: 1) disconnect the Ritter story from the agency and 2) make sure the public knew that an Oversight Committee had been appointed by the Board to fully investigate all charges. The Oversight Committee, chaired by former A.T.& T. president William Ellinghaus,[58] contracted investigations by the law firm of Cravath, Swaine and Moore (pro bono), the investigating firm of Kroll Associates, the accounting firm of Ernst & Young, the Child Welfare League and Richard Shinn, former president of New York Metropolitan Life (also pro bono). The fact that all issues were being fully investigated (albeit by groups under contract to the agency itself) seemed to calm matters, despite the continued scandal in some of the lesser-circulation press of the city,[59] and the necessary time lag in weekly national publications.[60]

In late March John Cardinal O'Connor named two priests of the

Archdiocese of New York, one a civil lawyer and the other a management specialist, as interim president and chief executive of Covenant House.[61] The Ritter chapter seemed to close with the month, as the Franciscans issued a statement that said that they had concluded their inquiry, the results were private, and Ritter should return to a friary of the order. During April and May the board also contracted for a deeply discounted public relations consult with Hill and Knowleton (Charles Perkins and Gordon Earl), and the preponderance of publicity about the agency dealt with the ways in which it was cutting back in order to deal with the inevitable drop in donations while maintaining its services[62] and the reorganization of its board of trustees.[63] Stories which focussed on the alleged corruption within the agency were relegated to the Catholic press,[64] where one former employee complained:

> In a misguided attempt to salvage its image, Covenant House has sacrificed Father Ritter to the court of public opinion. In so doing it has abandoned the very principles that made Covenant House the unique ministry of which so many of us were proud to be a part.[65]

The onset of summer lent little grist to the Covenant House story mill. On May 29, 1991 Robert McGrath joined Covenant House as Senior Vice President for Communications, a position he holds today. In mid-July an official of the Brooklyn Diocese's Catholic Charities, Sister Mary Rose McGeady, DC, was named president[66] and approvingly met by a New York Times editorial.[67]

It was not until August 3, a clear, hot Friday at the beginning of New York's month-long vacation evacuation, that Bruce

Ritter and Covenant House were in the news. The multi-authored "Statement of the Oversight Committee of Covenant House" was released. It had seven main findings: 1) Investigation of the sexual allegations proved that had Ritter not resigned "the termination of the relationship between him and Covenant House would have been required"[68]; 2) The Board should have been made aware of the Franciscan Charitable Trust; 3) Donor contributions are and have been appropriately handled; 4) Compensation of Covenant House executives is well within acceptable limits; 5) The corporation has been restructured so that the Board has true authority and responsibility; 6) Covenant House programs are sound; 7) Appropriate structural and procedural reforms have been undertaken in all areas identified by reports.

News stories focussed on the sexual misconduct charges against Ritter; by now the public's perception of the event through the media was that Covenant House had discovered and investigated its own problem, and was now getting back to the business of being a youth agency.[69]

III. The Future

Public relations was the solution, but the communications department of Covenant House had grown to enormous proportions, even for a corporation of that size. When the investigatory period began, there were approximately 15 people in the office, which presently houses a staff of five. While a 12% corporate cut was demanded by the real and projected drop in donor revenue, communications suffered a 66% cutback in personnel alone. Where the total income for the Fiscal Year '90 was $92 million, the projected donations drop of approximately 20% suggested a more realistic budget for the next calendar year would be $75 million. In fact, the projections were off by $1 million, but of the $74 million actually raised, less than 10% was in contracts and grants. So, while other agencies might be folding due to cutbacks or uncertainties in government funding, Covenant House finds itself in fairly good fiscal order. Its survival rests in restoring and maintaining public confidence in its abilities as an organization.

At present, nine people govern Covenant House, five men and four women. Two of the women, the president and the senior vice president for mission, are members of (different) religious congregations.[70] The mission statement of Covenant House calls itself "an institution in the Catholic tradition," which allows it to present itself as Catholic without any formal accountability to the Catholic Church, either through the Archdiocese of New York or through any religious order. There are conflicting views as to whether such a position is required in order to obtain federal or state funding by eleemosynary institutions.[71]

Covenant House now has 1,400 employees in 15 cities in North and South America. Sister Mary Rose McGeady was formally installed at a celebratory event which found the Governor, the Mayor, and the Archbishop of New York praising Covenant House and its work. Bruce Ritter has reportedly disappeared into the upper regions of the Hudson Valley and the organization's principle worry seems to be the fact that next years' annual report may have to disclose fund raising costs of 25 cents or 26 cents on the dollar, as opposed to 22 cents this year.

The damaging press has been attached, fairly or unfairly, to Ritter. And the organization survives.

Notes

1. The protesters have since received minimum sentences for disrupting the church service.

2. A number of publications still get this wrong. As recently as March 19, 1991 the New York Times confused homosexuality, which the Church considers as neutral, with homosexual activity, which the Church outlaws. "A national Catholic gay-rights organization asserted yesterday that Cardinal O'Connor, who has often expressed the church's doctrine that homosexuality is sinful, was partly responsible for the negative reception Mr. Dinkins received at the [St. Patrick's Day] parade." Robert D. McFadden, "Dinkins Joins Gay Marchers in An Encore," New York Times, pp. B1, B3.

3. Charles M. Sennott, "DA Probing Rev. Ritter," Post, December 12, 1989, pp. 7, 24.

4. Ibid. p. 7

5. Mike Pearl and Charles M. Sennott, "Second Youth Linked to Free Ride at Covenant," Post, December 13, 1989, p. 2.

6. "Yesterday, when a television reporter questioned Jim Harnett, chief operating officer at Covenant House, as to whether a sexual relationship existed between the priest and a Covenant House youth, Harnett exploded: 'It is outrageous. We will not even dignify it with a response.' Ritter, who spoke by telephone to The Post last week, also denied any sexual misconduct. 'No,' he said, 'Of course not. God help me, its not true...I am so careful.'" Ibid. p. 2.

7. Ruth Landa, "Rallying around founder," Daily News, December 13, 1989, p. 5.

8. Patrick Clark and Don Singleton, "Ritter's accuser wired by DA," Daily News, December 13, 1989, pp. 5, 20.

9. Patrick Clark and Don Singleton, "Ritter 'cooperating' But DA says probe in °earliest stages,'" *Daily News*, December 14, 1989, p.5.

10. Page One headline with photo of Father Ritter and runaway entering car.

11. Charles M. Sennott and Mike Pearl, "Ritter °Witness' Tells The Post About Taping," *Post*, December 14, 1989, pp. 1, 5.

12. Dennis Duggan, "A Good Man Smeared With Rumor's Mud," *Newsday*, December 14, 1989, p. 19.

13. *Daily News*, December 15, 1989, p. 1.

14. Rose Marie Arce, "Ritter Denies Misconduct," *Newsday*, December 15, 1989, pp. 7, 29.; Ronald Sullivan, "Ritter Denies Sex Allegations on Covenant House," New York *Times*, December 15, 1989, p. B2; Laurie Goodstein, "°Guardian' of Runaways Accused of Misconduct, Covenant House Priest Says Charges by Former Male Prostitute Are °Simply Nonsense,'" Washington *Post*, December 15, 1989, p. A16.

15. Charles M. Sennott, "Experts question Ritter's secret program," *Post*, December 15, 1989, pp. 4, 30.

16.. Karen Tumulty, "Prostitute's Claim Stuns Ministry to Runaways," Los Angeles *Times*, December 16, 1989, p. A24.

17. Ji-Yeon Yuh, "Cardinal Puts Faith in Ritter," *Newsday*, December 18, 1989, pp. 3, 19. The Cardinal is further quoted: "He has my complete trust. He has devoted his life to children in the most desperate states, taking in thousands of them."

18. Mike Santangelo, "Church probe if Ritter's charged," *Daily News*, p. 11. The Archdiocese took such issue with the Santangelo story that Acting Director of the Archdiocese's Office of Communications wrote that the "Daily News article concerning the Cardinal and Father Ritter is completely wrong....The Archdiocese is *not* preparing or even contemplating a probe of allegations against Father Ritter" and that Ritter's religious order, the Conventual Franciscans, were the proper authority for action, not the Archdiocese. Letter of Joseph Zwilling, December 18, 1989 to Editor, New York Daily News. See *Code of Canon Law*, Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1983: Can. 1399. "Besides the cases stated here or in other laws, an external violation of a divine or an ecclesiastical law can be punished by a just penalty only when the particular seriousness of the violation demands punishment and there is an urgent need to preclude or repair scandal."

19. James N. Baker, "Crisis at Covenant House," *Newsweek*, December 25, 1989, p. 82; Philip Nobile, "Body and Soul: New Allegations About the Secret Life of Father Ritter," *Village Voice*, January

30, 1990, pp. 25-32; Gabriel Rotello, "Cover-Up House?," Outweek, January 21, 1990, pp. 38-45.

20. M. A. Farber, "Priest's Accuser Is Called a Liar By His Father," New York Times, December 21, 1989; Rose Marie Arce and Clem Richardson, "Ritter Accuser's Dad Blasts Son," Newsday, December 21, 1989, pp. 8, 27; Don Singleton, "My son lies, says father in Ritter case," Daily News, December 21, 1989, p. 7.

21. Charles M. Sennott, "Dad: I Didn't Know of Son's Nights With Fr. Ritter," Post, December 22, 1989, p. 9.

22. Charles M. Sennott, "Another Ritter Bombshell, Priest Hit With New Sex Charge," Post, December 24, 1989, p. 9.

23. Philip Nobile, "Body and Soul, New Allegations About the Secret Life of Father Ritter," Village Voice, January 30, 1990, pp. 25-32, p. 29.

24. The Covenant House story is complicated, and for that reason many names are here omitted. A priest in upstate New York and several Covenant House employees were involved in the fraudulent obtaining of records. Charles M. Sennott, "Ritter Youth Was Given Dead Boy's ID," Post, February 5, 1990, p. 7; Ralph Blumenthal, "Image of Covenant House is Eroded by Sex Charges," New York Times, February 6, 1990, pp. A1, B4; "New face in the spotlight at Covenant House," Daily News, February 6, 1990, p. 6; Charles M. Sennott, "Covenant: We gave ex-hooker dead boy's ID," Post, February 6, 1990, p. 4, (p. 5, Late Edition).

25. Ralph Blumenthal, "Image of Covenant House Is Eroded by Sex Charges," New York Times, February 6, 1990, pp. A1, B4, p. B4; "Church Starts Probe of Ritter," Post, February 6, 1990 (Late Edition), p. 5.

26. Doug Ireland, "Press Clips," Village Voice, February 6, 1990, p. 8.

27. M. A. Farber, "Founder of Covenant House Steps Aside in Church Inquiry," New York Times, February 7, 1990, p. A1, B2; Bethany Kandel, "Youth Program Priest on Leave," USA Today, February 7, 1990, p. 2A; Howard Kurtz, "Covenant House Head Steps Aside as Allegations Rise," Washington Post, February 7, 1990, p. A16; Alison Carper and Joseph A. Gambardello, "Embattled Ritter Takes Leave," Newsday, February 7, 1990, p.4, 23; Charles M. Sennott, "Ritter Ousted," Post, pp. 5, 14; Kevin McCoy, "Ritter Bows Out," Daily News, February 7, 1990, p. 3.

28. Charles M. Sennott, "Fourth Sex Charge in Priest's Scandal," Post, February 7, 1990, pp. 5, 15.

29. Murray Kempton, "Good Name Put to Risk," Newsday, February 7, 1990, p. 4.

30. Dennis Duggan, "Who'll Do HIs Job Now?" Newsday, February 7, 1990, p. 4.

31. "Don't Break the Covenant," Newsday, February 7, 1990, p. 56.

32. "Covenant House, Beyond Father Ritter," February 8, 1990, p. A28.

33. Dennis Hevesi, "Macchiarola Starts Job With Covenant House," New York Times, February 8, 1990, p. B3 (Metropolitan edition) p. B5 (National edition); "Covenant House Appointment," Washington Post, February 8, 1990, p. A11; Chapin Wright, "Ex-Schools Chief Subs for Ritter," Newsday, February 8, 1990, p. 7; Mary Papenfuss, "Ritter Post Goes to Macchiarola," Post, February 8, 1990, p. 7.

34. Untitled ad, Daily News, February 8, 1990, p. 10.

35. "The tragedy of Father Ritter," Post, February 8, 1990, p. 24.

36. "Put Covenant House in Order," Daily News, February 8, 1990, p. 38.

37. Kathleen Hendrix, "Sex Charges Don't Shake Faith in Covenant House," Los Angeles Times, February 8, 1990, p. E1 (the photo accompanying the story shows Ritter in sweatshirt and jeans grasping at his belt or pants fly with both hands); Laurie Goodstein, "Covenant House Priest Defended," Washington Post, February 10, 1990, p. A3; "Clouds Over Covenant House," New York Times, February 11, 1990, p. E7: "°People need this place," said Vance Gibson, who has been at Covenant House for more than six weeks. °Where you gonna go?'"

38. Joe Nicholson and Mike Pearl, "Covenant House is Accused of Stalling Probe," Post, February 12, 1990, p. 9.

39. M.A. Farber and Ralph Blumenthal, "How Covenant House Gave Drifter a False ID," New York Times, February 15, 1990, pp. B1, B4.

40. James Barron, "Ritter and Macchiarola Quitting Covenant House," New York Times, pp. A1, A22.

41. M.A. Farber, "Morgenthau Won't Charge Ritter," New York Times, March 1, 1990, pp. B1, B6.

42. M.A. Farber, "Abrams to Investigate Covenant House Loans," New York Times, March 2, 1990, pp. B2, B4.

43. Ralph Blumenthal, "A $1 Million Fund Reportedly Used in Loans By Ritter," New York Times, March 6, 1990, pp. A1, B4; M.A. Farber, "Ritter Drew $140,00 From Youth Trust," New York Times, March 7, 1990, pp. B1, B4; Ralph Blumenthal, "I.R.S. Says It's Turned Up No Reports on Ritter's Trust," New York Times, p. B3.

44. "The Week," National Review, March 5, 1990, p. 12.

45. Ralph Blumenthal, "I.R.S. Says It's Turned Up No Reports on Ritter's Trust," New York Times, March 9, 1990, p. B3.

46. Kevin McCoy, "Cov House 'violent,' 'haphazard,'" Daily News, March 9, 1990, p. 7; Joe Nicholson, "Report: Covenant House had big woes before Ritter furor," Post, March 9, 1990, p. 4.

47. M.A. Farber," "O'Connor Is Moving To Clear Up 'Mess' At Covenant House," March 10, 1990, p. 1, 30. The article quotes Ralph A. Pfeiffer, Jr., chairman of the Covenant House board: "Obviously we failed," he said, "What we don't know is monumental."

48. Ibid. p. B3.

49. Covenant House spokesmen say that fund-raising expenditures for the period were $19.5 million for $94.4 million in donations and $5 million in government grants, a ratio of approximately 22 cents on the dollar.

50. William Treanor, "Rebuild, Don't Fix, Covenant House," New York Times, March 10, 1990, p. 25.

51. Laurie Goodstein, "Covenant House Stalwarts Fault Conditions, Name Prober," Washington Post, March 10, 1990, p. A2; Kevin McCoy, "House keepers in clean sweep," Daily News, March 10, 1990, p. 3; Joe Nicholson, "O'Connor vows to clean up 'awful mess,'" Post, Macrh 10, 1990, p. 5.

52. Joe Nicholson et. al, "Aide Seized for Rapes at Covenant," Post, March 10, 1990, p. 5; Patrice O'Shaughnessy, "Resident Eyed in Rapes," Newsday, March 10, 1990, p. 5; Joseph Kirby and Alison Carper, "Rape at Covenant House," Daily News, March 10, 1990, p. 5.

53. "Covenant House, Still Unswept," New York Times, March 16, 1990, p. A14.

54. Ari L. Goldman, "Cardinal Moves to Widen Role at Torn Charity," New York Times, March 19, 1990, p. A18. Goldman, one of the Times' religion writers, misspeaks when he calls brothers and nuns "members of the clergy;" the clerical state is restricted to those in orders, typically deacons, priests and bishops.

55. Ibid. p. A18.

56. Russell W. Baker, "Breaking the Faith, A Close Look at Covenant House," Village Voice, March 20, 1990, pp. 27-31, p. 30.

57. Bill Reel, "Ritter's not without loyal defenders," Daily News, February 8, 1990, p. 39. "°How long have you known Father Ritter?'" Stroock was asked. °Fourteen years,' he said....°Do you believe the allegations?' °Absolutely not.'"

58. The other members were Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, Cyrus Vance and Paul A. Volcker.

59. For example, Gabriel Rotello, "Gay Murder and Covenant House: The Secret Files," Outweek, March 28, 1990, pp. 42-53.

60. Frank Washington et. al, "Sex, Cash and Family Favors," Newsweek, March 26, 1990, p. 21.

61. Technically, the Cardinal submitted their names for approval to the board. The two, Msgrs. William J. Toohy and Timothy A. McDonnell, served until the new president took over. "Cardinal Names 2 for Covenant House," New York Times, March 24, 1990, p. 29; Wolfgang Saxon, "Cardinal's Choice to Fill in As Covenant House Leader," New York Times, March 26, 1990, p. B3.

62. "Spending Being Cut By Covenant House," New York Times, April 27, 1990, p. B2; Josh Barbanel, "Reeling From Its Own Crisis, Covenant House Scales Back," New York Times, April 28, 1990, p. 1, 30.

63. M. A. Farber, "Ritter Inquiry leading Many To Quit Board," New York Times, pp. B1, B4.

64. Roseanne Haggerty Redmond and Mark Redmond, "The Paradoxes of Covenant House," Commonweal, May 18, 1990, pp. 311-166. Their allegations were duly answered in four letters to the editor, by former employees Paul A. Gualano, Anne B. Donahue, and Gregory A. Loken, and by chief operating officer James J. Harnett, "Correspondence, Paradoxes of Covenant House," Commonweal, July 13, 1990, pp. 427-429.

65. Paul A. Gualano, "Vicious & evil," Commonweal, JUly 13, 1990, p. 427.

66. M.A. Farber, "Nun Is Named Covenant House President," New York Times, pp. 1 (photo and caption), B1, B4.

67. "Covenant House's New Broom," New York Times, p. A14.

68. "Statement of the Oversight Committee of Covenant House," p. 17. The report has it both ways, perhaps with the eye toward fending off successful lawsuits, for in speaking about the sexual allegations it notes: "None of the allegations, when viewed individually, can be proven beyond any question. There is no physical corroboration, Indeed, the private nature of the activity alleged made it virtually impossible for there to be such corroboration." One of the accusers has reportedly settled his lawsuit, and a second is pending. Covenant House is being defended by the law firm which was the architect of the report, Cravath, Swaine & Moore.

69. M.A. Farber, "Covenant Report Is Said to Find Sex MIsconduct," New York Times, August 3, 1990, pp. A1, B4; Charles M. Sennott, "Sex Rap in Ritter Report," Daily News, August 3, 1990, p. 11; "Probe: Ritter Reportedly Found Guilty," Newsday, August 3, 1990, p. 23; Joe Nicholson, "Covenant Report: Ritter Guilty of Sex Misconduct," Post, p. 5.

70. Mary Rose McGeady, DC, President; Senior Vice Presidents: Robert Cardany, Chief Financial Officer; Marita Carew, RSHM, Mission; Patricia Connors, Human Resources; James Harnett, Chief Operating Officer; Tom Kennedy, Program Development; Robert McGrath, Communications; Denise Scelzo, Fund Raising and Development; Stephen Torkelsen, External Relations.

71. Phyllis Zagano, "Sectarian Universities, Federal Funding, and the Question of Academic Freedom," Religious Education 85:1 (Winter, 1990) pp. 137-147

To Tell the Truth: Codes of Objectivity in Photojournalism

Dona Schwartz
School of Journalism and Mass Communication
University of Minnesota
111 Murphy Hall
206 Church Street SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455
(612) 625-9824, 644-8177

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To Tell the Truth: Codes of Objectivity in Photojournalism

This paper examines the strategies used by photojournalists to construct pictures that conform to the canons of objectivity undergirding journalistic practice. Elements of the visual code of *naturalism* employed by photojournalists are described. While photojournalists' rhetoric suggests that content is the primary determinant of news photographs' meanings, this study concludes that form plays the crucial role. The rules and professional practices of photojournalism, as outlined in all photojournalism texts currently in print, provide the data base for this study.

To Tell the Truth: Codes of Objectivity in Photojournalism

Dona Schwartz
University of Minnesota

Recent mass media scholarship has shed considerable light on journalistic objectivity as a social construct. Seminal studies by researchers like Tuchman (1978), Gans (1979), Epstein (1973), and Fishman (1980) have revealed the relationships among work routines, professional norms and values, and the institutional contexts in which newsmaking takes place. Examining news production as a social activity has helped to place objectivity within an appropriate cultural frame, allowing us to see it as a professional value and a set of communicative strategies employed by journalists. While the newsmaking routines associated with print and broadcast journalism have received significant scholarly attention, surprisingly little scrutiny has been directed towards news photography, or photojournalism.

Both history and popular lore have encouraged us to view photographs as direct, unmediated transcriptions of the real world, rather than seeing them as coded symbolic artifacts whose form and content transmit identifiable points of view. Statements of the kind made by Lady Elizabeth Eastlake, published in the *London Quarterly Review* for 1857, represent the enduring popular attitude towards the medium of photography:

> [Photography] is the sworn witness of everything presented to her view. What are her unerring records in the service of mechanics, engineering, geology, and natural history, but facts of the most sterling and stubborn kind?...Facts which are neither the province of art nor of description, but that of a new form of communication between man and man--neither letter, message, nor picture--which now happily fills up the space between them?

Since the introduction of photography, viewers have invested the medium with a level of authority and credibility unparalleled by other modes of communication. The iconic similarity of the photograph to its subject masks the distinction between image and reality, and obscures the significance of the picture-making process in the construction of a photographic message. Like Lady Eastlake, most contemporary viewers continue to think of the photograph as a transparent window on the world, capturing the reality in front of the camera lens.

The facticity attributed to the photographic image contributed to the emergence of its reportorial use in the latter part of the nineteenth century. During this period of photographic experimentation, energetic camera operators explored a variety of uses for this new medium. They employed photographs for artistic, commercial, and scientific purposes at the same time that the use of the photograph as a documentary record was expanding. In the United States, Jacob Riis is the most frequently cited pioneer of photojournalism, utilizing photography as a part of his reportorial apparatus to cover the "police beat" in New York City during the 1880s and 1890s. During the late 1800s it also became clear to newspaper publishers that using illustrations boosted the circulations of their periodicals. The reluctance of editors and publishers to sensationalize or cheapen their publications with photographs gave way with the development of increasingly reliable and standardized reproduction technology and the prospect of increased sales. By the 1920s photographs became a regular part of the news diet.

Tension between the natural and the symbolic is an inherent aspect of photography.[1] To viewers possessing little familiarity with the processes of photographic image-making and the choices shaping the appearance of the final printed photograph, the image seems unquestionably truthful, generated by the subject matter itself, rather than the agency and the intent of the photographer. However, when the many variables involved in the photographic production process are examined, the conventionally constructed, symbolic character of photography becomes undeniable. The iconic linkage of subject and image causes an ontological conundrum unique to photography. For this reason, photography offers a productive focus for the study of objectivity as a social phenomenon.

Photojournalists, highly skilled manipulators of the medium, must negotiate the tension between the natural and the symbolic in photography during the course of their everyday work routines. Although photojournalists are constantly involved in the manufacture of imagery and they actively employ a set of learned codes and conventions, they still must work to legitimize photography as a medium that "captures" the news. They must insist on the objectivity of their pictures at the same time that they attempt to demonstrate their mastery of the craft.[2] Thus, the relationship between content and form plays a pivotal role in defining photojournalism. As an objective newsgathering activity, photojournalists view content as primary, while form serves as its vehicle, imperceptibly transporting content to the viewer. The rhetoric surrounding the practice of photojournalism configures form as transparent, and thereby neutral. For example, Frank Hoy, a photojournalism professor, advises aspiring photojournalists:

> The practical test of any compositional device is whether the viewer can understand the content. When the viewer notices a form or composition, it has called attention to itself at the expense of the message. Content must communicate with the viewer so clearly that the viewer doesn't even notice the compositional devices (Hoy, 1986:169)

Hoy's advice suggests that photojournalists learn to integrate the dualism of photography into a single conceptual package rendering news photographs simultaneously natural *and* symbolic through a communicational code of *naturalism*. As I use the term, *naturalism* refers to a communicative strategy which seeks to obscure the articulatory apparatus utilized in the production of a message, diminishing the perceived presence of an author and the significance of intent or point of view. To quote Hoy,

> In many instances the photograph is interpretative, in that it can also present a point of view--the photographer's personal intellectual stance, opinion, or unique attitude toward the subject. At its best, however, the single photograph overcomes its "one-view" disadvantage by communicating the significance of a scene or event. To do this the photojournalist must know the story and how much to include in the frame. He or she must question the resulting photograph, asking whether it is true to the nature of the particular news (1986:76).

This approach to photography exploits the iconic nature of the medium and suggests that photographs are authored by the subject matter they depict, with the able assistance of the skilled photojournalist.

Working from the assumption that news photographs are socially constructed artifacts, their appearance shaped by the institutional context of the mass media organization in which the are produced (cf. Rosenblum, 1978), this discussion examines how the code of journalistic objectivity is expressed in photographic terms and the symbolic strategies photojournalists are taught to employ in order to make pictures that tell the truth.

DEFINING PHOTOJOURNALISM

A comprehensive catalogue of the communicative codes of photojournalism is readily available in photojournalism textbooks. Written by journalism school faculty members (most of whom have come from the ranks of professional photojournalists) photojournalism textbooks detail the photo-techniques, typical work routines, professional ethics, and visual aesthetics of news photography. These how-to-do-it manuals offer the aspiring photojournalist a complete introduction to canons of professional practice, framed within a distinctive set of values and beliefs which school the reader in the culture of the profession. An analysis of these texts reveals one mechanism by which professional practices and codes are perpetuated.

In an attempt to explicate the role of photography in journalism I have analyzed the eight photojournalism textbooks currently listed in Books in Print. The high degree of correspondence found among these texts, expressed in recurrent professional rhetoric and aesthetic prescriptions, underscores the existence of a functioning code of photojournalistic practice. Examples from these sources will be used to construct a composite view of photojournalists' approach to objectivity.

A common presupposition found in these texts is that photojournalism's primary responsibility is to engage and inform a non-specialized mass readership. Frank Hoy lists a set of characteristics defining photojournalism that illustrate these ideas.

> ...photojournalism is communication photography. The communication can express a photojournalist's view of a subject, but the message communicates more than personal self-expression.
>
> The aim of the photojournalist is to communicate a clear message so the viewer can understand the situation quickly. The power of a great photograph is the power of an immediately understood message. The simpler the composition, the better the photograph...
>
> ...photojournalism *reports*...you should report news so readers wish they had been there...
>
> ...photojournalism deals with people. To succeed, the photojournalist must have a great interest in people. People are the prime ingredient in both ends of the photojournalistic message--they are the subjects and the viewers...

> ...photojournalism communicates to a mass audience. This means that the message must be concise and immediately understood by many different people. Private images or meanings have no place in photojournalism. A photojournalist can produce lasting images, even art, but the immediate message must effectively communicate to a mass audience (1986:5-7).

Photojournalism texts are rife with inferences about the needs and desires of readers, although the characterizations are rarely supported by any explicit evidence. Instead, photojournalists carve out their roles and responsibilities in response to an audience constructed on the foundation of "occupational wisdom" and common sense.[3]

Content: Fires, Accidents, and Crime

Content plays a major role in defining photojournalism, and the code of photojournalism includes a conception of what is and what is not news photography. Photojournalists adhere to a conception of news values espoused by print journalists, and because their images often illustrate reporters' stories a clear parallel can be found between the kinds of stories newspapers run and the kinds of images staff photographers produce. Photojournalists recognize a finite set of picture-making categories, categories which are formalized through National Press Photographers Association (NPPA) competitions, held nationally each month. Picture categories include: spot news, general news, features, sports action, sports feature, portrait/personality (close-ups), environmental portraits, pictorial, food illustration, fashion illustration, and editorial illustration.

News photography categories warrant particular concern here, because news pictures demand the photographer's reportorial skills as an impartial observer.[4] Photojournalists distinguish between two types of news assignments, and these distinctions are routinely discussed in photojournalism texts. Spot news refers to the coverage of unanticipated events, photographed as they happen or soon afterwards. Disasters, acts of violence, and conflict predominate. General news, in contrast, refers to planned news events, such as press conferences, speeches, ceremonies, or parades.

Kobre defines news in contradistinction to feature photography, writing that

> A news picture portrays something new. News is timely. Therefore news pictures get stale quickly (1980:100).

Feature pictures, on the other hand, are expected to exhibit a quality of timelessness, depicting subject matter not necessarily defined by a specific time or place. Features pictures record commonplace occurrences, while

> A news picture accrues value when (1) its subject is famous, (2) the event is of large magnitude, or (3) the outcome is tragic (Kobre 1980:101).

According to Kobre even the act of shooting a news photo differs from shooting a feature photo in that photographers surrender control to the news event itself:

> With hard news the event controls the photographer. Photographers jump into action when their editor assigns them to cover a plane crash or a train wreck. When they reach the scene, they limit their involvement to recording the tragedy. They certainly would not rearrange the bodies and wreckage for a more artistic picture angle (Kobre, 1980:102).

Despite the assertion that photojournalists *record* events when they cover news assignments, photo texts give clear instructions detailing how a news event *should be photographed* in order to produce the the most complete narrative re-telling. Kobre, in particular, gives lengthy descriptions of three major types of spot news assignments--fires, accidents and disasters, and crime--and he offers both a rationale for the newsworthiness of each and a list of specific photo possibilities, described in detail. His advice reads like a film storyboard, pre-scripting the visual narrative.

Why should photojournalists shoot fire pictures? Because, explains Kobre, even though "they have read the news about fires, people want to see pictures of the disaster," and photographs "can show not only the emotions of the participants, but also the size of the fire better than words can describe it" (1980:52). Photo coverage should include:

1. a record shot;
2. an overall shot, perhaps from a high angle, in order to establish the location and the size of the fire;
3. the human side of the tragedy;
4. firefighters at work;
5. the psychological attraction of the fire ("the crowd stares with wide eyes and open mouths, seemingly transfixed");
6. the economic angle--the type of building burning, its proximity to other buildings in the neighborhood, the extent of the damage, the cause of the fire, investigators at work;
7. the scene of the fire on the following day--charred buildings, residents returning to examine belongings.

The list of photos Kobre suggests makes possible the construction of a visual narrative filled with drama, excitement, and pathos. While the newsworthiness of the report receives significant attention in Kobre's text, the importance of *emotional impact* is a recurring theme in this and other discussions of spot news photography (see especially Rothstein, 1979 and Hoy, 1986). Because photojournalists assert that photography operates primarily at the level of emotional response, pictures exemplifying good news photography are said to "grab at the heartstrings of the reader" (Kobre, 1980:55).

Like fires, "accidents make news" so photojournalists need to know how to photograph them. Kobre offers four reasons for shooting accidents and disasters. First, "accidents and disasters occur" and to "record what goes on in the city and to keep readers informed about what's happening constitute two of the major roles of the press." Second, "readers are curious about accidents." Third, "people want to see what they read about." And fourth, "accident pictures grab the emotional side of the reader...the picture brings the tragedy home" (1980:61). Kobre acknowledges that while accidents are all different, they also "have certain points in common for the photographer to look for" (1980:63). As before, he generates a list of shots the photographer can make.

Kobre advises photographers to "concentrate on the human element of any tragedy," because "readers relate to people pictures." A straightforward record shot should be made because "the viewer wants to see the relationship of the cars to one another and to the highway." Symbolic pictures can be used to imply what occurred, affording editors the option of using a picture lacking literal (gory) detail. Photographers can sometimes make pictures that show the cause of an accident, and they should attempt to portray its effect on people in the surrounding area (e.g. traffic jams). A follow-up story might look at the frequency of accidents in the area. To round out the coverage, the photographer should try to portray people's responses, "how they adapt to their misfortune" (1980:63-64).

While crimes may be difficult to photograph as they occur, Kobre suggests that a "photographer with good news sense can learn to predict some situations that might erupt into violence," an important skill because "crime, almost any kind, makes a printable story in most newspaper offices throughout the country" (1980:67; 70). According to Kobre, photos of crime personalize the meaning of "abstract crime figures" for readers. Newsworthiness aside, photojournalists should shoot crime pictures because they "rivet the attention of the viewer." Kobre substantiates his claim by citing the popularity of TV cop shows. News photography differs from TV representations, however, in that

> [a]ctual news photos take the viewer from the fantasy realm of television to the real crisis in the streets. Crime photos in the paper remind the viewer that felonies don't stop at 11 P.M.; they can't be switched to another channel, or turned off at bedtime (1980:70).

Building on what he considers to be evidence of public interest in crime photographs, Kobre asserts further:

> The public's insatiable curiosity about crime photos accounts also for editors' continued use of such photos. Few readers can resist inspecting a photo of a mugging in progress or a grocery store hold-up.
>
> Perhaps readers' curiosity for crime pictures lies in a deep-seated belief that criminals look different from regular people. Even though psychologists have disproved the notion of the "criminal face," the reader checks to see if the convict has close-set eyes or a lowered brow--just as the reader suspected...(1980:70).

The circular reasoning exhibited here legitimizes crime as a worthy spot news subject, and the photojournalist's (and editors') responsibility to satisfy perceived viewer interest perpetuates this type of photographic coverage.

News as narrative. With the three examples of spot news coverage Kobre offers, the importance of narrative becomes clear. In each case, photojournalists are directed to compile a set of photographs which will allow an editor to assemble a sequential visual representation of a news event, telling the story "as it occurred." Since very few stories utilize more than a single photograph, each individual image should be able to tell something significant about the event in case it is used alone. In each example reviewed, the photographic strategy includes making a shot to establish the scene; photographs of participants, whether victims or authorities; representing the nature and extent of conflict, injury, or damage; photographs showing the *modus operandi*; and photos representing the effect of the incident. In all cases, photographers are instructed to seek out opportunities to represent the affective dimensions of the stories they shoot, personalizing the news and allowing for reader identification and empathy.[5] As the suggested photo possibilities make clear, drama is an important story element because drama draws and holds viewer attention, provoking a more emphatic impact and legitimizing the utility of visual illustrations.

Kobre compares the photojournalist's job with that of the movie director: when Gone with the Wind was shot, the director carefully planned each shot. Photojournalists do the same thing, but they "work under the pressure of the moment" without the luxury of retakes. Going beyond notions of appropriate content, Kobre suggests a specific formal approach to "directing" a photo assignment, assuring visual variety and complete coverage of the event. The establishing shot should be taken from a high angle using a wide angle lens. Medium shots "contain all the 'story-telling' elements of the scene...compressing the important elements into one image." The close-up adds drama and "slams the reader into eyeball-to-eyeball contact with the subject." The close-up "elicits empathy in the reader."

Utilizing these strategies allows the photojournalist to produce a dramatic visual narrative. The fact that Kobre employs comparisons from entertainment media--television and film--warrants note. By invoking these comparisons, Kobre implicitly frames news photographs within the domain of narrative fiction. Like a good movie or television show, photojournalism benefits from conflict, excitement, action, and emotion. Pictures exhibiting these qualities are assumed to satisfy readers' visual appetites. The photographic strategies Kobre recommends require a simultaneous conception of news photographs as impartial recordings of events and as dramatic photoplays. This conceptual merger resembles the format of docudrama, an emergent genre of television entertainment that packages fact in the conventions of narrative fiction.

Extending this further, Kobre advises that even general news assignments can take on the drama and excitement of spot news if the photojournalist approaches them in a way that demonstrates the *uniqueness* of the event. The photographer can portray the "flavor" of a meeting:

> through the creative application of framing techniques, catching the moment, and using long lens and light, the photographer can help portray for the reader the excitement, the tension, the opposition, and the resolution of the meeting (1980:79).

Similarly, Hoy writes that with general news the photographer is

> still aiming to get a spontaneous photo, so look for candids as the event unfolds. After you have covered a number of similar events, you can anticipate the action (1986:66)

While explicit manipulation may violate professional norms, setting out with a pre-conceived storyboard does not. Prior knowledge about news events and the conventions guiding editors' decisions elicit from photojournalists a routine work strategy that ensures predictability and aesthetic continuity.

People and posing. Because people pictures are a staple of photojournalism, photo texts offer extensive advice on establishing rapport with subjects. To pose or not to pose people when shooting an awards ceremony, a mug shot, or an environmental portrait raises questions of professional ethics. Hoy addresses the issue in this way:

> Perhaps one of the most confusing myths of photojournalism is that posing or directing a subject is unethical. The second most confusing myth is that the vast majority of good photographs you see in magazines and newspapers are totally candid. The old photojournalism saying, "make a picture, don't just take one," applies to imaginative thinking. It also applies to the many situations where some posing of the subject is needed to get more than a snapshot....

> A working photojournalist cannot consistently cover assignments without being willing and able to pose, direct, or otherwise enlist the cooperation of subjects. It is ethical to do all of this to get a better, more story-telling, photograph.

Tips for making subjects look natural abound: when photographed in familiar surroundings a subject is more likely to "be himself"; look for gestures that give an informal appearance; coax people to do what they normally do; when there is too little time to wait for a natural response or to establish rapport, provoke a reaction; ask for a demonstration to "elicit the natural ham in people"; or tell the subject exactly what to do. Rothstein echoes Hoy when he addresses the ethics of re-enactments in his text:

> The re-enactment of a news event is a problem for every photographer's conscience. It can be resolved only when the photographer honestly believes that his directions are creating a true picture of what actually happened. Direction by the photographer supposes a conception of what the final print will be like. It should add to the realism of each picture by coordinating the events or subjects before the camera to make the visual impact more effective. Direction has its greatest value when it is least discernible (1979:44).

Kobre suggests that photojournalists ask subjects to wear professional costumes (a lab coat, for example), and to pose them in front identifying props that will indicate their significance. He also spells out the meanings viewers will attach to different kinds of lighting and compositions. High-key light will be perceived as "upbeat", while shadows will lead to a somber image. A balanced composition will suggest stability, while an off-balance composition will produce tension. Close-ups suggest intimacy.

A constant admonition underlying the discussions of useful strategies is that the use of these picture-making techniques should not be discernible to the viewer. Photojournalists strive to construct naturalism; the pictures they make need not actually *be* spontaneous or candid, but they should *appear as if they record actual behavior.* The photographer bears responsibility for the honesty of his or her portrayals of individuals and events. If the image is true to the *spirit* of the subject, the means to that end are justified--the photograph must tell the story.

Form

While the range of subjects appropriate to news photography contribute to the communicative codes of photojournalism, form plays an important role in distinguishing photojournalism from other kinds of photographic practice. Photojournalists strive to make form transparent, an unobtrusive vehicle for content. Yet despite the prominence of this notion, formal codes can be readily identified by examining news photographs. The aesthetics of photojournalism require the active manipulation of form in order to maintain the illusion of naturalism.

In his discussion of techniques of good composition, Kerns offers this advice:

> Economy of visual elements within the frame is primary to visual success. Convey the most information or emotion with the fewest visual elements possible. When this guideline is followed, there is little to confuse the reader (1980:76).

Likewise, Hoy recommends "simplicity of design":

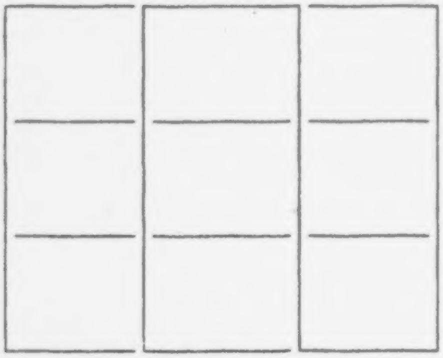
> Even when reporting a complex idea or scene, your design should be simple and effective (1986:163).

As is frequently the case, the needs of the reader are invoked in these calls for simplicity. The recurring assumption in photo texts is that readers cannot adequately deal with images requiring active, extended scrutiny. Good news photographs communicate their messages directly and immediately. As Geraci writes:

> In simplicity, as in brevity, there is usually strength. So it is with photographs. The less cluttered, the more readily the eye of the beholder can grasp the full meaning of a photograph. The quicker it gets to the reasoning center of the brain, the quicker a reader can register approval or

disapproval. If a photograph is too cluttered, the reader may move on to something else without really comprehending the subject of the photograph at all (Geraci, 1984:122).

Simplicity of design is achieved by following a set of regularly cited rules. In a well designed photograph, the "center of interest", the main subject of the picture, must be clearly discernible to the viewer. This may be accomplished through framing, selective focus, or the use of leading lines in the composition. Photojournalism texts uniformly recommend use of the "rule of thirds" in order to frame the subject in such a way as to assure a dynamic composition. Using the rule of thirds, the pictorial frame is divided into three equal sections, horizontally and vertically, as though a tic-tac-toe board were drawn within the edges of the frame. The grid produced by this partitioning yields four points of intersection, all of them off center. The main subject is placed at one of these four points of intersection in order to produce an active composition with visual interest.



At all costs, photographers are enjoined from placing the subject in the middle of the frame, because centered compositions inevitably produce a "static image". To achieve pictorial balance, Kerns (1980) recommends that photographers place the largest object in the frame at one point of intersection on the rule of thirds grid, and the smallest object at another.

Rothstein (1979) discusses selection and focus as key elements of composition. According to Rothstein, photographers should select the proper moment, the right lens, and the best viewpoint in order to emphasize the center of interest in the image. Manipulating the focus within the frame allows specific areas of the photograph to remain discernibly sharp, while others blur. Varying focus makes it possible for the photographer to direct the viewer's attention to a particular part of the photograph, passing over others. Choosing when and how to shoot a picture, the photographer controls which elements within the visual field will receive viewer attention.

"Distracting" backgrounds and foregrounds can plague photojournalists, diluting the immediate impact of their pictures. Framing and selective focus are used to draw attention away from "inessential" objects or activities in the foreground or background. Photographers can either move in closer to eliminate unwanted elements from the frame, or they can throw them out of focus by manipulating the depth of field of the camera lens they have chosen. Distracting elements, known as "clutter", draw viewers' attention in different directions, detracting from the simplicity of the composition, and making it more difficult for the reader to instantly apprehend the significance of the image. Kerns writes:

> Our pictures may have more than one area of interest, but it should be instantly clear what the most important center of interest is (1980:81).

Because professionals assert that photojournalism communicates immediately and emotionally, too much visual information appearing within the frame undermines the efficacy of the image.

The use of "leading lines" also helps establish the photograph's center of interest. Leading lines result from the presence of objects within the frame that impart a sense of directionality. For instance, the appearance of a roadway from lower left to upper right within the frame would tend to draw the viewer's gaze in a diagonal direction through the picture. Photojournalists recognize the utility of these directional elements and frame their pictures so as to exploit the graphic emphasis leading lines offer. Hoy (1986) suggests the use of leading lines to point to the picture's center of interest. He mentions lines in the shape of a "c", an "l", and a "t", as well as "s-curves", "pluses", and "radials".[6]

Taken together, these three formal strategies--the rule of thirds, selective focus, and the use of leading lines--allow the photojournalist to construct a successful image capable of communicating "at a glance." Hoy offers a list of related semiotic equations photojournalists should keep in mind:

simplicity of design=visual impact
visual impact=action or possibility of action
close up=intimacy or emphasis
long shot=isolation or aloneness
subject facing into frame=leads to object of gaze
subject facing out of frame=mystery
sharpness of detail=reality
softness of focus=mystery or non-reality
lightness of print=happiness
darkness of print=sadness or foreboding
facial expression=best for showing emotion (1986:167)

Because many of the circumstances confronting photojournalists demand split-second responses, these formal decisions are often made tacitly, carried out as a part of the routine of the job. Unlike other photographers, photojournalists usually have little time to consider a variety of approaches. They rely upon the codes of photojournalism, internalized through professional practice, to guide the process of making pictures.

GOOD NEWS PHOTOGRAPHS

The qualities attributed to good news photos recur across photojournalism texts. The criteria used to evaluate news photographs are criteria invoked with regard to judging other kinds of picture-making as well. That is, photojournalists respond not only to the norms and conventions of newsmaking, but also to the norms and conventions of picture-making. Some of the values ascribed to good paintings, good movies, good television shows, and good photographs also influence what is considered to be a good news *picture*. Geraci's view is illustrative:

> Photographs, to be good photojournalism, must be a "slice of life" lifted from reality and transferred to silver in such a manner that the viewer senses some of the spontaneity and excitement of the original scene. If the subject looks uncomfortable, the viewer will feel this discomfort. If the subject is static, "posing for the camera," the viewer will soon lose interest and move on to another thing. If the subject appears commonplace, viewed from eyelevel and lacking action or some other visual appeal, the picture will not long command the attention of the viewer (1984:115)

Beyond truthfulness then, good news photographs must have "visual appeal", an ephemeral quality attributed to pictures that people seem to enjoy looking at. Geraci associates visual appeal with impact and emotion. Kobre calls good news photos "eye stoppers", pictures that have interesting patterns, strong contrasts in tonal value, pictures that lend themselves to unique cropping, and hold viewers' interest (1980:208). Photojournalists agree that photographs with visual appeal are well composed, pleasing to the eye. Beyond the recipes offered for good composition, well-made photographs trigger an intuitive positive response. "If it looks right, chances are a photo *is* well composed" (Geraci, 1984:116).

For Geraci, visual appeal also requires dramatic action, real or implied:

> To be interesting, a photograph must convey a sense of the expectant....In most photographs action is an asset and it is indispensable in news photographs.... Action and viewer interest are intertwined. A photograph lacking action is probably one lacking interest, certainly universal interest, and very likely should not be used in a publication (1984:85-86).

As a storytelling medium, stories told in an exciting way are valued above stories told matter-of-factly. Dramatic angles, framing, and lighting add to the impact of the image, presumably piquing viewer interest. Emotion is prized; news photos wring emotional response from viewers as no other medium can. Action, drama, and emotion are conveyed through the content of the image, but these qualities are also conveyed through the formal treatment given to the image. With news photographs, *what* is represented and *how* it is represented give the image its impact. Despite the insistence on the pre-eminence of content, form plays a crucial role.

CODES OF OBJECTIVITY

Photojournalism relies upon the notion that photography captures an objective record of reality for viewers. Yet, at the same time, a clearly defined system of rules and conventions governs the professional practice of photojournalism, delimiting the range of appropriate images and shaping the form those images take. Paradoxically, news photographs are valued as neutral records at the same time that they are admired as carefully crafted pictures. Photojournalists earn kudos not only for what they show, but also for how well they show it. Photo competitions pitting photojournalists against one another in the quest for the best telling of the story attest to the importance of craft in the photojournalistic enterprise.

Photojournalists operate within a conceptual framework and within an institutional context that determines what subjects warrant attention. Conventions of framing, composition, lighting, and color or tonal value guide the translation of newsworthy subjects into the two-dimensional photographic image. But the representational devices employed by photojournalists are designed to be transparent. If an image is dramatic, it is the subject that appears to produce the drama, not the representational skill of the photographer. In their careful crafting of images, photojournalists ascribe to a formal code of naturalism, preserving the objective aura cast around the photographic image.

Well schooled in the techniques and the conventions of photojournalism, the photographer can approach any event, object, or individual and translate actuality into imagery. In an important sense, the practice of photojournalism supersedes its objects: the codes of professional practice make it possible to translate real life's complexity into a visual representation "immediately understandable" to the viewer. The simplicity of the translation, a quality valued by photojournalists, provokes an emotive response. The dramatic stories told by good news photographs are meant to be apprehended viscerally. The narrative frame cast around news events encourages readers to identify with the story, the dilemmas and situations of its starring actors, masking complexity and diffusing critical response. Photojournalism, cloaked in its mantle of objectivity, offers the viewer a vision of the world easily consumed and digested, while its naturalism perpetuates its legitimacy as an objective bearer of the news.

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1. Worth and Gross (1974) distinguish between natural and symbolic events and the interpretational strategies they provoke. When viewers encounter natural events they need only recognize

that they exist--natural events require no interpretive response. Symbolic events are assumed to have been intentionally created for the purpose of communicating meaning. Once a viewer identifies a symbolic event, it behooves him or her to attend to the purposeful ordering and structuring of that event in order to interpret the message it advances. Photographs are often mistaken for natural events, requiring no interpretation, and to a very large degree photojournalism depends upon this misapprehension.

2. The conflict endemic to managing this dichotomy is not unique to photographers. Wordsmiths have also developed strategies for naturalizing the newswriting process, transforming authored accounts into objective reports. Photojournalism parallels newswriting in this regard, but the degree to which subject matter, or content, is thought to determine form is especially salient in photography.

3. Muriel Cantor (1971) discusses "old line" Hollywood TV producers' similar common sense knowledge about the desires and needs of the television viewing audience, and says that they make programming decisions based upon this intuitive understanding of the public.

4. Sports action photography is considered to proceed from objective sports reporting skills, like news photography.

Portraiture should also reflect or reveal the real personality of the sitter, according to photojournalism texts, and the photographer's job requires that he or she come to some kind of understanding of the nature of the subject in order to succeed at making the portrait.

5. The recommendations offered by Kobre substantiate Hall's (1981) claim that news photographs present a view that disarms readers' critical apparatus by personalizing events and encouraging an empathetic response to the image.

6. The compositional rules offered in photojournalism textbooks bear a strikingly close resemblance to the rules followed by amateur camera club photographers. And an examination of literature distributed by Eastman Kodak Company--how-to-do-it manuals and books on photography--yields the same set of recipes for successful picture making. This confluence of conceptions of good photography is related to the pivotal role played by the photographic industry in generating consumer markets and setting standards for photographic practice. (See Schwartz and Griffin, 1987)

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News Council Complainants:
Who Are They and What Do They Want?

Louise Williams Hermanson
University of South Alabama

A paper presented to the Mass Communication and Society Division of the
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This study is part of the search for a better way to hold media accountable for the power they wield in society. A major goal of the study is to help find a system of media accountability that encompassing social ethics and legal alternatives. It seeks a way to establish meaningful dialogue between members of the public, who depend on the media for information, and media practitioners, who do a difficult job under extreme pressures.

The work is rooted in the social responsibility model of the press and accepts that model as realistic and appropriate for American media. It is based on a belief that a well-designed media accountability system is in the best interest of the media, individuals and society in general. Such a system can enhance First Amendment freedoms of speech and the press rather than restrict them. Properly designed, established and implemented, such a system can provide better public understanding of the way media work and greater acceptance of honest errors. The media can gain credibility, and the public can gain assurance that the media care about responsible journalism and social welfare.

This study joins an already active discussion about alternative dispute resolution (ADR) in legal disputes with the media. Within the past several years, the Iowa Libel Project[1] and the Annenberg Proposal[2] contributed important data and commentary to the search for an improved system of resolving public-media disputes. In addition, a number of alternative dispute resolution systems in other areas of the law have been tried with varying degrees of success in different parts of the country. Massachusetts, New York, Maine and Fulton County (Georgia) projects are but a few. The projects involve a number of types of ADR, such as arbitration, mediation, negotiation, advisory juries, rent-a-judge programs or specialized boards. These methods of resolving disputes encompass voluntary and/or court-annexed systems dealing with disputes in civil and criminal areas of the law.[3]

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[1] John Soloski and Roselle L. Wissler, "The Libel Dispute Resolution Program: A Way to Resolve Disputes Out of Court," Beyond the Courtroom: Alternatives for Resolving Press Disputes, Richard T. Kaplar, ed. (Washington, The Media Institute, 1991) 83-111.

[2] Proposal for the Reform of Libel Law: The Report of the Libel Reform Project of the Annenberg Washington Program (Washington: The Annenberg Washington Program in Communications Policy Studies of Northwestern University, 1988), 20.

The following goals have been consistent in ADRs:

- Reduce court congestion;
- Cut costs of dispute resolution;
- Speed up the resolution process;
- Improve access to justice;
- Improve the quality of justice;
- Provide community involvement in decision making;
- Allow for decision makers with specialized knowledge in the disputed area;
- Provide more comfortable outcomes for the participants;
- Allow variation in the winner-take-all climate of the courts;
- Help participants understand the feelings and needs of both parties;
- Expand a resolution system to those who do not or cannot use the legal system.[4]

In spite of their spotty existence, news councils provide the most data for a workable alternative system for citizen disputes with the media. Goals of the legal system's ADRs are compatible with Minnesota and National News Council goals, and a study evaluating the news council process in light of these goals can add significantly to the search for an alternative to the present problems in libel litigation. In addition, news councils provide a forum for discussing media abuses that harm individuals and/or society but have no validity in a court of law. If the process, structure, funding and other problems associated with news councils can be addressed constructively, news councils may provide answers and open forums for discussion about what media should provide and how practitioners should behave in society.

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[3] Sally Engle Merry, "Disputing Without Culture," Harvard Law Review 100 (1987): 2057; and Richard A. Posner, "The Summary Jury Trial and Other Methods of Alternative Dispute Resolution: Some Cautionary Observations," University of Chicago Law Review 53 (1986): 366.

[4] Jessica Pearson, "An Evaluation of Alternatives to Court Adjudication," Justice System Journal 7 (1982): 420; Leo Kanowitz, "Alternative Dispute Resolution and the Public Interest: The Arbitration Experience," Hastings Law Journal 38 (1987): 239; and "Practice and Potential of the Advisory Jury," Harvard Law Review 100 (1987): 1363.

Much has been written about the media's response to the news council process, and much of this response has been negative. Many media representatives have gone on record as viewing news councils as just another form of harassment. But little research has been done concerning the function of a news council as a viable alternative to the legal system, and even less has been done to determine the satisfaction of members of the public who have complained to a news council.

By surveying those who complained about media performance, this study looks at news councils and their potential to provide a workable alternative dispute resolution system. Information was collected from those who complained to the Minnesota or National News Council from March 1972 to March 1989. These are the only adjudicating news councils in American history and, therefore, the only ones who can give meaningful information concerning a news council's usefulness to the public in media/citizen dispute resolution. The survey has particular strengths in that it included all persons who made complaints resulting in written determinations for both councils. Although addresses were as much as 16 years old, a majority of the complainants were located, and response to the lengthy survey was good. The survey was designed to determine satisfaction with the process and constitutes the only data of its kind available for study. Done in mail survey form, the research concentrates on how those who used the councils perceived the system and the media and whether they were satisfied with the news council as an outlet for frustrations they felt because of media coverage about an issue important to them.

Because concentrated ownership of media means tremendous power in American society, some form of accountability for the media seems necessary. Accountability requires the media to be answerable to some system or organized body. The idea of a responsible press carries the connotation of a voluntary adherence to a set of rules growing out of the institution's understanding of the needs of society. This study focuses on accountability for the media, not just a voluntary acceptance of some undefined concept of responsibility to society. It provides new information, but it does not provide overall solutions to a general problem. The study focuses specifically on how those who complained to an adjudicating news council see the validity of the process.

The greater long-term goal is to help provide a system for individual citizens to complain effectively about media performance. This system must somehow balance power between the media and individuals as well as between the free speech and free press clauses of the First Amendment. It should also provide a way for someone who has been harmed by news coverage to bring injustice to the attention of the news medium's audience. This study contributes information from a frequently overlooked group with specialized knowledge concerning how the media should be held accountable.

Survey Procedures

When the Minnesota Press Council[5] was conceived, there was no American model for what the founders hoped to accomplish. The press council idea had been batted around since World War II, but efforts to create a workable, lasting council were sporadic at best.

A mention that the press should be accountable to any adjudicating body elicited fierce opposition from members of the press.[6] The concept of a council to pass judgment on media performance was extremely unpopular in media circles, so it was remarkable that the Minnesota Press Council and the National News Council began operation in the early 1970s. During their history, the two councils handled a number of disputes involving claims that could have been taken to court. The concept of a news council as an alternative to the courts is found in the literature of both organizations.

The two news councils provide concrete examples of media accountability under the restraints of the First Amendment. The Minnesota News Council, the first state-wide press council in the country's history,[7] is still functioning, and the National News Council recorded more than ten years as an adjudicating body.

As with the legal system, many cases are instigated and either settled or dropped before they reach formal adjudication. The Minnesota News Council has handled more than 1,170 complaints.[8] The council helped resolve 186 without hearing, disallowed 130, dropped 730 and handed down 76 written determinations between 1971 and 1989. The National News Council logged 1,253 complaints between 1973 and 1984. It took no action of any kind on 199, dismissed 827 without formal hearing and gave full hearing culminating in the issuance of determinations on 227. The determinations stand as the official decisions of the two news councils.

The idea for this study came from viewing news councils as equalizers between the powerful media and the public they serve. An adjudicating news council provides a service to the individual members of society who feel wronged by the more powerful media by giving individuals an opportunity to speak in a forum with impact. A council also provides an opportunity for vindication.

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[5] The Minnesota Press Council changed its name to the Minnesota News Council in 1975 when it decided to accept complaints about broadcast as well as print media.

[6] Norman E. Isaacs, "Why We Lack a National Press Council," Columbia Journalism Review (Fall 1970), 19-17.

[7] J. Edward Gerald interviewed by the author, tape recording, Minneapolis, 3 May, 1988.

[8] Tom Patterson, Executive Director, Minnesota News Council, Minneapolis, telephone interview by the author, Minneapolis, 17 May 1988. The News Council had handled 1,049 cases and made 75 determinations as of that date.

This study seeks to describe who complains to news councils and how they value the system. It was limited to the only two American adjudicating news councils to evaluate whether a news council can or should serve as an alternative to the courts in disputes with the media in light of First Amendment law and tradition. Cases taken through to determination represent issues important enough for the councils to agree to schedule them for hearing, and they involve complainants who were interested enough to follow through. This idea is an expansion of Merry's suggestion that an important research task "should be to chart the actions of experienced mediation clients to see what they do when the next problem comes along. These are people who obviously know what mediation is and what it can do for them, and it would be of great value to know if they seek out mediation for their next dispute or if they go to court."[9]

Previously, almost nothing had been done to get feedback from complainants. The literature is heavily skewed toward media reaction to news councils. Only two studies were found that addressed the process from the complainants' perspective. Those studies were very limited in scope, based on a very small number of respondents and focused on media satisfaction with the process, using complainant's surveys as incidental to the study. Robert Schafer's 1982 thesis focused on how the media responded to the Minnesota News Council, but he also surveyed 38 complainants to determine if they thought the council was biased and whether they approved of the council. On a five-point scale ranging from biased to not biased, the average was 2.53. Complainants also reported they were pleased with the news council process, although about a fourth of them found the procedure time consuming and confusing.[10]

Fred Johnson's 1975 study of the Minnesota Press Council, which included only 24 usable responses, showed that complainants overwhelmingly supported the council but did not feel performance of the media had improved because of its existence.[11]

Amanda Nunamaker's dissertation examined the structure of the National News Council in 1977.[12] Her study looked at how the National News Council fit into the social responsibility theory of the press and evaluated its chances of serving a useful function under that concept. The study did not deal with complainants' opinions about the council.

Ann Brill of Marquette University interviewed Minnesota News Council members about their free speech philosophy and knowledge of the media. She found few differences between media and public news council members concerning views of media freedom and accountability. She did not survey or deal with the opinions of complainants.[13]

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[9] Merry, 2957-2073.

[10] Robert Mills Schafer, "The Minnesota Press Council." (Master's Thesis, University of Minnesota, 1982).

[11] Fred Johnson, "The Minnesota Press Council: A study of its effectiveness," Mass Communications Review (Winter 1976-77), 13-19.

[12] Amanda W. Nunamaker,"The National News Council: A Study of Its Concept and Development, 1972-1977." (Ph. D. diss., George Peabody College for Teachers, 1977).

Because news councils evolved instead of being created through feasibility studies, most of the literature on the topic is reactive. A number of articles discuss how the media perceive news councils, but little is known about who complains to news councils, what they hope to accomplish or how they perceive the process. The topics they complain about can be identified by analysis of news council decisions, but why the individual chose a news council for a forum and how satisfied he or she was with the outcome can only be determined by asking the complainant. Even the demographics of complainants are gathered here for the first time, and the results show that complainants do not represent the average American.

This study involves information obtained from those who complained to the Minnesota or National News Council from 1972 to the present. There were no similar studies dealing with news council decisions, so the best alternatives for examples in structuring the survey were studies dealing with media disputes in the legal system. The Iowa Libel Research Project, which involved a 1985 study of those who sued the media for libel,[14] and a study in progress at the Silha Center, which hopes to take a look at those who sued the media for invasion of privacy,[15] provided a basic model for the social science research used to collect information from those who complained to the councils.

The Iowa Project studied "the entire libel litigation process, from the appearance of the allegedly libelous story through discussions between plaintiffs and attorneys, to the outcome of the case."[16] The Iowa researchers used telephone interviews to ask plaintiffs about their involvement in libel suits litigated between May 1980 and April 1984. This part of their work was extremely valuable in developing a survey of complainants in the news council process. Although a news council complaint is not as structured as a lawsuit, there were strong similarities in the goals of the two studies.

The Iowa study sought to identify satisfaction with the process and to determine if the media's treatment of plaintiffs was a factor in their decision to litigate. The study found that plaintiffs had been strongly influenced to bring suit by media treatment of them after the story had been run, and plaintiffs sued for reasons other than money. Their main reason, the researchers reported, was vindication.

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[13] Ann M. Brill, "The Minnesota News Council: Who ARE These People and Why Are They Second-Guessing the Media?" paper presented to the Mass Communication and Society Division, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Minneapolis, August 1990.

[14] Randall P. Bezanson, Gilbert Cranberg and John Soloski, Libel Law and The Press: Myth and Reality (New York: The Free Press, 1987).

[15] For more information about this proposed study, contact Dr. Donald M. Gillmor, Silha Center, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

[16] Bezanson, 239.

The Silha Center study was in the conceptual stage at the time this news-council project was developed, and work on the questionnaire for that study provided a format for many of the questions in this one. The Minnesota study seeks to gather from invasion of privacy plaintiffs information similar to that gathered in the Iowa study.

For this news-council study, a telephone survey was cost prohibitive; therefore a mail survey was chosen. This required modification of questions and a questionnaire design that would encourage complainants to fill out and return the survey in a timely manner. A great deal of information was sought about events that happened a long time in the past for most respondents. This was a major concern, both for validity of the information and for response rate. Ideally, the survey would have been done immediately after the hearing stage of the news-council process. This was not possible, but the study was considered valid since this pool of complainants is made up of the only Americans to experience the news-council adjudication process.

Based on logic, research about users of other alternative dispute resolution systems and surveys of the public concerning their attitudes toward the media, the following hypotheses were formulated:

> H_1. Those who used the Minnesota News Council were more satisfied with the results of the decisions because they were more involved in the process than those who used the National News Council. Satisfaction with the process could be improved by allowing more involvement.

Analysis of the legal system through social science research is basic to legal literature about how individuals approach disputes. The work views disputing as a social process where individuals derive benefits beyond that of winning and losing. Researchers also define dispute resolution as an evolutionary process that changes as the individual interacts with others who know about, listen to discussions, give advice and assist in resolution of the dispute. The idea of satisfaction being linked to involvement comes from this work.

> H_2. Although respondents will report overall satisfaction with the concept of news councils, they will report dissatisfaction with the process and outcome of their particular case(s) and with the media in general.

Alternative dispute resolution literature indicates that individuals frequently support an idea but are more critical of their own experiences in the process and are likely to see the outcome in their cases as less satisfying than the results obtained by others. This notion is fostered by the fact that people involved in disputes tend to be less than completely truthful about reactions to the outcomes after the process is completed, especially if they did not perceive themselves as "winning."

> H_3. Those who used the news councils do not see voluntary, non-binding news council decisions as a viable alternative to the legal system and desire some system of punishment for media found to be guilty of unethical behavior.

Literature about media credibility and libel litigation indicates jurors and members of the public see media as arrogant, powerful, uncaring structures in society that deserve punishment for maltreatment of those harmed by media coverage.

> H_4. Those who used news councils saw the councils as the only viable option for putting pressure on the media to act responsibly in their particular cases and feel that without a news council they have no effective alternative for complaining about media performance.

The vast majority of news council complaints deal with ethical issues and questions of fairness instead of questions where a valid legal claim is stated. American society provides few places for disgruntled members of the public to take complaints about media performance. Among options are ombudsmen, who are at few papers; letters to the editor, which are filtered through newsroom executives; and professional journalism publications, which are alien to all but avid media watchers.

The survey instrument was designed to collect data about how complainants view the media, freedom of the press, and the news council process. It sought to:

- Identify problems perceived by the complainants;
- Identify strengths of the system as the complainant experienced it;
- Identify perceived biases in the system;
- Determine if the complainant would use a council again if one were available;
- Determine complainants' reactions to the legal waiver required by the councils.

Most of the questions in the survey were concrete questions to be answered either on a continuum or by selection from carefully stated categories. This allowed statistical analysis of the answers. In addition, there were open-ended questions which encouraged respondents to contribute additional information in narrative form. Statistical and narrative information was used to address questions such as:

- Why did the complainant decide to use the council?
- What would complainant have done if the council had not been available?
- With whom did complainant talk about the problem before he/she contacted the council?
- How did the complainant find out about the council?
- What perception did the complainant have about the purpose of the council?
- What did the complainant hope to accomplish through the use of the council?
- What did the complainant actually accomplish through the use of the council?

- Was the complainant satisfied with the results? Why or why not?

- Had the complainant ever used the legal system in a dispute with a media outlet?

- Would complainants have used the legal system if the press council had not been available?

- What did complainant think of the council's legal waiver policy?

- If there had been a charge for press council services, would the complainant have used the council?

- How does respondent think alternative dispute resolution systems for media disputes should be funded?

- Which of the two news council systems -- that of the National News Council and that of the Minnesota News Council -- is most workable and why?

- What changes could be made in the system to make it more workable?

No list of those who complained to the council existed; therefore, it was necessary to go through each complaint file to gather names and addresses of complainants.[17] This was done during December 1988 and January 1989. The number of complainants does not equal the number of determinations because some complainants made more than one complaint to the council and some cases had multiple complainants. Because the study focused on how the individuals perceived the process, complainants, rather than cases, were used as the research unit of analysis.

Minimal indexing has been done on the files, and the only way to identify actual complainants and obtain addresses was to look for correspondence concerning the complaint. Each letter was scanned to be certain it was from someone actively involved in the complaint to the council, not someone the council had contacted for additional information or for some other reason. Two hundred seventeen persons were identified as complainants in the 227 decisions handed down by the National News Council. Addresses were in the files for 212 of them. All addresses were at least six years old; some addresses dated back 16 years.

A similar situation existed with the Minnesota News Council, but news council staff went through the files and created a list of complainants' names and addresses. Again, addresses were old. Eighty-one individuals were identified as complainants in the 76 determinations issued by the council between September 1971 and February 1989.

This lack of basic information about complainants is indicative of the void of information about what complainants thought of the process. Since complainants make up a full section of the triad necessary to conduct a news council -- media, council, complainants -- their reactions to the process provides a missing element in the search for a workable media ADR system.

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[17] The National News Council's original files are housed in the Social Welfare History Archives, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

As expected, it was much more difficult to find National than Minnesota News Council complainants. There was a greater likelihood National News Council complainants were geographically mobile, since a number of them worked for national corporations and gave business addresses to the council. Also, the National News Council had ceased operation more than five years earlier and it was necessary to identify complainants from files without the assistance of news council staff. While only 15 Minnesota News Council complainants could not be located, 104 National News Council complainants could not be located. Four National News Council complainants were deceased. This left a pool of 66 from the Minnesota News Council and 104 from the National News Council for the survey.

The survey instrument was divided into two parts, one to collect general information about the complainant and his or her views about media and the other to collect information specific to the complaint made to the council. Complainants who made multiple complaints received one copy of part one of the survey and two copies of part two. Part two specified the complaint the respondent was to refer to in answering the questions. If a complainant was involved in numerous cases, two major complaints were selected by the researcher. This was done to avoid overworking complainants and cutting response rate.

Fifty Minnesota and 70 National News Council respondents returned the completed surveys, providing a return rate from the pool of located complainants of 75.8 percent for Minnesota respondents and 67.3 percent for National respondents. Returned surveys represented 49 Minnesota cases and 73 National News Council cases. This represents 61.7 percent of all Minnesota complainants, who were involved in 64.5 percent of all cases, and 33 percent of all National News Council complainants, who were involved in 32.2 percent of all cases.

Closed-question data were coded and cross-checked by two persons before being analyzed for frequencies and correlation between answers to key questions. The demographic data are presented in the form of percentages and provide considerable information about complainants. Confidence levels for correlations are well within that of the normal social science acceptability range of 95 percent.

Demographics from a 1985 study conducted by MORI Research, Inc. for the Associated Press Managing Editors Association is used in the analysis of the news council data.[18] The APME study compared journalists' and the public's views on newspaper credibility, ethics and social responsibility. Researchers found that nearly all journalists agree with the public that a high priority should be placed on media ethics and credibility. Although journalists trust their newspapers more than the public does, they also question how well media fulfill their social responsibilities. Journalists also joined the public in having difficulty balancing such individual and social rights as free press and fair trial. The study focused on journalists' responses, but questions asked public respondents were valuable in comparing news council respondents' views with those of the general public. The APME study included 875 public respondents, and the data were weighted to match census figures. News Council survey respondents were asked several basic questions included in the APME study to determine if news council respondents differ from average Americans. Figures from the APME[19] study are given beside news council figures for questions common to both surveys.[20]

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[18] Journalists and Readers: Bridging the Credibility Gap. A national study commissioned by the Associated Press Managing Editors Association (Minneapolis, Minn.: MORI Research, Inc., October 1985).

Summary of Data

The survey data indicate most respondents do not hate the media, although they see a number of negative sides to news-gathering and reporting processes. Respondents see freedom of the press as an important societal goal, and they think news councils can contribute to that goal. Frustration about the system becomes apparent in responses about where individuals can complain about media sins and how much effect those complaints have on the long-term practices of the media.

Correlations in the data seem to support the theory that complainants who are actively involved in the process and who participate in the hearing are more likely to be satisfied with all aspects of the process. The data also show that complainants who sought legal advice and thought they had a case strong enough for the legal system were usually satisfied with the news-council process and the decision.

A Times Mirror study of the public's perception of the media outlined six types of media users. They include:

1) Reflexive Supporters (21 percent)-- uncritical, uninvolved and unsophisticated in their approval;

2) Empathetic Supporters (26 percent) -- informed, involved, critical of the press' dependency on outside influences;

3) Ambivalent Supporters (23 percent)-- uninvolved, question some press practices, appreciate press' value;

4) Main Street Critics (15 percent)-- informed, critical of press practices and values;

5) Embittered Critics (10 percent) -- alienated, unsophisticated and critical of the press on all counts;

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[19] The APME study report does not give numbers for each category.

[20] Some of the questions in this survey also correspond to questions in the privacy study proposed by the Silha Center for the Study of Media Ethics and Law at the University of Minnesota. Once that data is collected, comparisons could be made with that group also. Information on which questions were common to this survey and the privacy study as of March 1989 is available from the author.

6) Vociferous Critics (5 percent) -- sophisticated, involved, vocal, critical of press, see press as an adversary of power structure[21]

The Gallup Organization's Times Mirror study claims the supportive groups are twice as large as the critical groups, but critics tend to have greater knowledge about the press and greater interest in general press issues. Press critics, the report said, are more vocal, intense and involved with press issues than other citizens. The study found that 48 percent said news organizations tend not to care about the people in their stories, and respondents expressed disapproval of media performance involving fairness, independence and respect for privacy.[22]

Data from this news council study reveal that members of groups two through six of the above list were represented in complaints to the Minnesota and National News Councils, with heavy weighting toward group six. Vociferous Critics are likely to have attended college, be business or professional people and live in urbanized areas. They are said to be upscale, conservative, vocal, intense and informed.[23]

A 1985 American Society of Newspaper Editors' study of media credibility also showed that 78 percent of respondents think journalists don't worry much about hurting people. The ASNE study found that people in the highest and lowest educational and income groups rate media credibility lower than those in the middle educational and income group.[24] Of a group the study calls "Sophisticated Skeptics" nine out of 10 agree that reporters don't care whom they hurt in pursuit of a story. This group was found to be heavily exposed to media, have a high level of interest in government and public affairs and feel they can influence events. Seventy-two percent of Sophisticated Skeptics read a newspaper almost every day and more than half prefer newspapers and magazines as their sources of news.[25]

The demographics of news council complainants are closely related to those of the Times Mirror study's Vociferous Critics and the ASNE study's Sophisticated Skeptics. An understanding of these characteristics could help realign the structure of news councils. If a news council's goal is to serve these elite groups because they are most knowledgeable and involved in social responsibility issues, the council should be designed with different processes than if the goal is to serve the average citizen with a place to complain about maltreatment by media.

For the most part, news councils have served an elite, sophisticated audience. Those who complained to the councils and received determinations in their cases were very well educated,[26] very affluent individuals[27] who kept up with current affairs and frequently used the news council to further special interests. A number of them were actively involved in the political process and many had either run for political office or worked on campaigns. Others were paid to protect the image of a group, organization or business. Some served as public relations practitioners or lobbyists. The councils also served individuals enraged by coverage of a particular issue, but these individuals had to be articulate, organized and persistent enough to pursue the complaint through a rather complex procedure. They also had to have the time to devote to such a pursuit. Neither news council served a cross-section of the population, and a number of serious concerns about media responsibilities, such as how they cover minority and women's issue, seldom arose.

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[21] Gallup Organization, 4. A description of the characteristics of each group is found on pages 47-52.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., 51.

[24] David Lawrence Jr., "Survey Maps Out Details of the 'Credibility Problem'," ASNE Bulletin (May 1985), 4.

[25] Ibid., 17.

[26] More than 84 percent had at least a college education, and more than 48 percent had post graduate degrees.

Although complainants were frustrated with parts of the news council procedure and with the imbalance of power between them and the media, they saw a free press and the news council process as valuable. The majority of complainants expressed a belief that courts were not really an alternative for them. The problem they had with the media was not one appropriate for the courts, or litigation was perceived as being too expensive or too complicated. Although income levels indicate they should have been financially able to litigate if they chose, a number of complainants said they were not willing to risk heavy legal fees to obtain resolution of the case. Most of the complainants who saw their case as one suitable for the courts did not want what the court could offer. They wanted vindication, not money; they wanted to have their views considered important, to be heard, to be recognized. Since they do not trust media-controlled ombudsmen, letters to the editor or retractions, they saw the news council as the only forum where they had a chance to accomplish these objectives.

Although some complainants were negative about news councils, most were not. Most said the idea is a good one, but the process and power of the council need to be modified. Few were overjoyed with the process, but most felt it was better than nothing. Basically, complainants saw the media as arrogant and inconsiderate and felt an independent body to mediate public-media disputes is badly needed.

Data from the survey point to improvements that should be made in the news-council process if news councils are to function as a viable system of accountability for media. They also point to elements that must be considered if other councils, including another national news council, are to be formed.

> H_1. The data will reveal that those who used the Minnesota News Council were more satisfied with the results of the decisions because they were more involved in the process than those who used the National News Council and satisfaction with the process could be improved by allowing more involvement.

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[27] More than 60 percent had total household incomes of more than $50,000 in 1988.

This hypothesis was supported by statistical data. Overall Minnesota respondents spent more time on their cases, were better satisfied with the result and expressed more willingness to use a news council again. Ninety percent of Minnesota respondents made a statement at a hearing; only 4.3 percent of National News Council respondents did. There was a high correlation between whether a complainant made a statement at the hearing, a key indicator of complainant involvement in the process, and satisfaction with the overall news-council process. Minnesota respondents also evaluated all parts of the process more favorably than did National News Council respondents, and a much larger percentage of Minnesota respondents reported they were satisfied with the way the case was handled by the news council -- 76 percent for Minnesota respondents and 38.6 percent for National News Council respondents. Greater involvement in the process also made complainants feel they accomplished more of their goals, and they expressed appreciation for the chance to be heard.

> H_2. Although respondents will report overall satisfaction with the concept of news councils, they will report dissatisfaction with the process and outcome of their particular case(s) and with the media in general.

This hypothesis was partially supported by the data. More than 70 percent of all respondents to the survey of complainants reported that councils are somewhat or very valuable. Eighty percent reported they were glad they filed their complaint, although only 46.7 percent said they won their case. However, more than 57 percent thought the news council process was fair. Only 43.3 percent thought the legal waiver was fair. More than 52 percent thought the news council took care to consider both sides of the issue and was thorough enough to learn the truth. Fewer than 47 percent said news council decisions are somewhat or very valuable. Fewer than 18 percent reported they thought the decision in their case had a long-term effect on media performance.

> H_3. Those who used the news councils do not see voluntary, non-binding news council decisions as a viable alternative to the legal system and desire some system of punishment for media found to be guilty of unethical behavior.

This hypothesis is only partially supported by the data. More than 45 percent of the respondents agreed that news councils are better than courts for resolving disputes. This was unexpected, and probably due to respondents' consideration of the costs involved in litigation. Fewer than 42 percent thought news councils should be allowed to fine media, but more than 76 percent thought the news council should be allowed to require media to run an apology if the council found against the medium. The Times Mirror study revealed that 89 percent of respondents thought the media should face libel suits if they print false stories and should pay damages even if they believed the information was true at the time of publication.[28] The support for requiring media to run an apology runs counter to current right-to-reply law as expressed in Tornillo.[29] In Tornillo, the United States Supreme Court specifically refused to require editors to run material they chose not to run. The support for libel damages even if the media believe the information was true at the time of publication runs against current libel law which requires at least a negligence standard for private plaintiffs and an actual malice standard for public-figure plaintiffs as expressed in New York Times and its progeny.[30]

> H_4. Those who used news councils saw the councils as the only viable option for putting pressure on the media to act responsibly in their particular case and feel that without a news council they have no effective alternative for complaining about media performance.

This hypothesis was strongly supported. Two-thirds of respondents agreed there would have been no one to complain to if there had not been a council. A majority would use a council again if one were available and they had another complaint similar to the one they brought to the council. Many respondents wrote long passages in open-ended sections of the survey explaining that they felt the news organization would have simply ignored them if they had not had the council available to them. They reported a feeling that they lacked power to force even an acknowledgement that a problem existed. The news council, many said, at least got the attention of the news organization.

Questions

General questions concerning news councils came from a long-standing interest in the work of councils and extensive time spent examining and analyzing decisions of the Minnesota and National News Councils and the files of the National News Council. Although the original complaint letters and other correspondence between complainants and news council staff are available in the National News Council files, they did not answer a number of questions important to any continuation or improvement of the news council process. Answers to general questions posed by the study include:

- *Why did the complainant decide to use the council?*

Complainants wanted vindication, a chance to be heard, an opportunity to try to persuade the news council and the media to accept their side of the story. They also hoped to get the news medium to apologize and to run the news council decision.

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[28] Gallup Organization, 35.

[29] Miami Herald Publishing Co. v. Tornillo, 418 U.S. 241 (1974).

[30] New York Times v. Sullivan, 376 U.S. 254 (1964); Gertz v. Robert Welch, Inc., 418 U.S. 323 (1974); Dun & Bradstreet, Inc. v. Greenmoss Builders, Inc., 472 U.S. 749 (1985).

- *What would complainant have done if the council had not been available?*

Many complainants reported they would have done nothing if there had been no council. Others said they would have tried to talk with the media. Although contacting the news organization is part of the news council process, some reported that they might have approached the media differently if they had not known the news council was there to assist them in getting the complaint heard. Almost all expressed frustration with having contact with the media as the only alternative. Several said they would probably have at least threatened or filed a lawsuit. Research has indicated many persons who file lawsuits never intend to go to court, that they get satisfaction from the act of filing the suit without the expense of carrying through.[31] However, having a suit filed against the medium can be costly for both plaintiff and defendant, even if the plaintiff drops the suit.

- *Whom did complainant talk with about the problem before he/she contacted the council?*

The survey shows that Minnesota respondents talked with many people about the complaint besides persons at the the news organization and news council staff. National News Council respondents talked with fewer friends, relatives and coworkers about the complaint. This more business-like approach may be due to the fact that most National News Council complainants were representing groups or organizations instead of making a complaint about coverage of themselves as individuals. National News Council complainants were less likely to have a personal stake in the outcome of the decision, and as Merry explains, disputes are cultural events.[32] Ways of dealing with disputes derive from customs embedded in social groups and cultures.

- *How did the complainant find out about the council?*

Most complainants found out about the council through the news media. Some complainants were journalists or public-relations practitioners who found information in professional journals. In Minnesota, a number of respondents reported seeing notices about the council in their local newspapers. Minnesotans also reported hearing about the council from legislators or attorneys. Several Minnesota complainants mentioned that the news council had been discussed as a viable alternative in state house or senate debate.

- *What perception did the complainant have about the purpose of the council?*

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[31] Austin Sarat, "Alternatives in Dispute Processing: Litigation in a Small Claims Court." Law and Society Review 10 (1976), 346; and Sally Engle Merry, "Going to Court," Law and Society Review 13 (1979), 891

[32] Sally Engle Merry and Susan S. Silbey. "What Do Plaintiffs Want? Reexamining the Concept of Dispute," The Justice System Journal 9 (1984),157.

The council's purpose was to give complainants a chance to speak out about abuses and to persuade the media to apologize, according to most respondents.

• *What did the complainant hope to accomplish through the use of the council?*

Complainants mainly hoped to correct the record, to get media to give more balanced coverage, to get an apology.

• *What did the complainant actually accomplish through the use of the council?*

Almost all respondents thought they accomplished some of their purposes, if nothing more than giving the medium a hard time. One respondent said media think twice about hurting those who fight back. He perceived that the medium was a little more careful when they did stories about his organization after his complaint. That was enough for him. However, another complainant, whose food-industry product received negative publicity based on what he felt were irresponsible journalistic practices, said the news organization avoided all coverage of his business because he complained to the Minnesota Council. He reported that his products were left out of all future comparisons in the food pages, thereby denying positive coverage he felt his products deserved when compared fairly with similar products in the field.

• *Was the complainant satisfied with the results? Why or why not?*

Unless the complainant received a determination almost exclusively in the complainant's favor, few expressed satisfaction with the results. Even those who won their cases were not satisfied with the publicity the decision received except in two cases. Most felt the media should have an obligation to report on the decision and were disappointed when they did not or when the decision was buried in the back pages after the original article had been run on front page.

• *Had the complainant ever used the legal system in a dispute with a media organization?*

A sizeable percentage of Minnesota respondents were attorneys, so they, of course, had been involved in legal disputes. A small number of others reported they had filed suit, and the reasons covered a variety of areas of the law. A large number said they simply did not believe in suing. One respondent, who had received irresponsible medical treatment that cost him a leg, said he was so glad to be alive he did not consider suing. Someone who refuses to sue for such a serious, permanent, life-threatening loss is highly unlikely to sue for damages caused by words.

• *Would complainants have used the legal system if the press council had not been available?*

Again, many respondents simply would not consider going to court. Several respondents reported they had been told they could probably win if they went to court, but they chose the council because it could give them vindication quicker without the expense. Looking back, at least two said they should have gone to court instead of to the council.

- *What did complainant think of the council's legal waiver policy?*

A number of respondents recognized their complaint as inappropriate for the legal system, and because of this did not object to the legal waiver. Others thought the legal waiver was unfair because it was one-sided. Some thought it non-binding, and at least one sued on related issues after the council's decision. This complainant took issue with the news council's interpretation of the waiver and obviously won.

- *If there had been a charge for press council services, would the complainant have used the council?*

A number of respondents said they would consider using the council if there were a fee, but most of these complained on behalf of an organization or business. Several thought the idea was "simply ridiculous." Almost none of the respondents who complained on an individual basis reported they would use the council if there were a fee of more than a few dollars.

- *How does respondent think alternative dispute resolution systems for media disputes should be funded?*

Respondents oppose taxes and fees to complainants. They favor foundation grants or fees charged to media, media professional organization support, media and public donations. Several suggested special seminars, workshops or publications for which the news council would charge. Other suggestions included subscriptions to a news-council media ethics magazine or newsletter that included discussion of cases and issues raised before the council.

- *Which of the two news council systems -- that of the National News Council and that of the Minnesota News Council -- is most workable and why?*

Minnesota News Council respondents clearly rated that council as better than National News Council respondents rated the national council. The key seems to be in the interaction allowed by the Minnesota News Council process. This is possible because of the smaller geographic area covered, especially since most Minnesota News Council cases come from the Twin Cities area. National News Council respondents did not feel they were an important part of the process. Many said they felt they were forgotten after the complaint was made, and several complained that the news council completely lost sight of the purpose of the complaint and focused on what the respondents felt were mini-issues or insignificant details of the complaint.

- *What changes could be made in the system to make it more workable?*

More attention needs to be given to the reasons complainants use the councils. Basically they want vindication and a fair airing of the complaint. They responded well to an opportunity to tell their side of the story. They also want speedier results and regional hearings. Councils should also find ways to appeal to members of the public who are poorer and/or disenfranchised.

Conclusions

This study shows that American adjudicating-news-council complainants were not irresponsible "crazy" people with nothing better to do with their time. The two news councils considered complaints from well-educated media critics heavily involved in political, community and social issues. If unsophisticated complainants without foundation for their criticism approached the news councils, they obviously were weeded out by news council staff before hearing stages. A group of persons with demographics similar to that of news council complainants has been identified by at least two other studies[33] as the most vocal media critics. All three studies show that the group is relatively small, but it has influence far greater than the numbers indicate.

Complainants are heavy media users who keep up with the news through more than one source and are likely to have first-hand knowledge about significant areas of social concern. They are also accustomed to being heard and getting things done. If there is no news council, they will probably find another way to express their dissatisfaction with the media. Several news council respondents reported involvement with Accuracy in Media, a right-wing organization of self-appointed media watchers, and at least one other is involved with The Media Institute, an institute supported by big business. If there is no forum they perceive to be useful or with a suitable philosophical bent, they will possibly create one, as those who began Accuracy in Media and The Media Institute did.

Most members of the complainants' groups are also affluent, and they hold positions of power in their professions and communities. They have the contacts and money to bring lawsuits against offending media in cases where such action would be appropriate, but they report that they prefer to avoid the courts because of time and expense. They report they are more interested in vindication or acceptance of their opinion about media performance than in winning money. They also want to affect what they perceive to be media arrogance and lack of concern for individuals and social organizations. An overwhelming majority reported media should be required to run information about a news council decision if the medium was found to be irresponsible, but they oppose government interference with media. They respect freedom of speech and the press, but they think they have just as much right to complain about the media as the media have to say what they wish.

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[33] Gallup Organization, The People & The Press; and David Lawrence Jr., "Survey maps out details of the 'credibility problem'," ASNE Bulletin (May 1985) 3-19.

Respondents were overwhelmingly supportive of a social responsibility concept of American media. This was particularly obvious in the open-ended sections of the survey. They feel all members of society, especially those who work for powerful communications media, have a responsibility to the whole. They understand the need for responsible media coverage of events and issues so individuals can make important personal and public decisions. They demand accuracy, fairness and balance. They want all sides of stories included, and they want explanations and evaluations of data so that the public is not misled. They seem to adhere to the popular bumper-sticker message: There is no freedom without responsibility. They also think media cooperation with a forum such as a news council is a small price to pay for First Amendment guarantees.

Although most news-council decisions dealt with ethics and policy in news gathering instead of with complaints involving questions suitable for the courts, this study shows several cases where the news council did serve as an alternative to the courts. All respondents who reported that they had a complaint that could have been taken to court also reported satisfaction with the news-council procedure and decision. Their reasons for choosing the council instead of going to court involved unwillingness to spend the money to sue, desiring to avoid the complex structure of the courts, and feeling the courts are not the answer to problems dealing with media sins.

Other studies have reported that many persons who bring lawsuits want vindication,[34] and a news council is uniquely qualified to provide that type of remedy. The news councils addressed disputes with the media giving special attention to news-gathering problems, and they placed a moral obligation on the medium to publicize council decisions. Media that accepted this moral obligation and publicized the news councils' decisions gave complainants what many consider the best possible remedy for defamation: correction.

What is exceedingly clear is that the type of person whose complaint was accepted for hearing by the two news councils will complain about the media whether there is a news council or not. Strong criticism surfaces in reports of media think-tanks, letters to the editor of competing media, and articles in specialized publications dealing with media criticism. One respondent said his news-council case provided information for an article he was writing at the time, and others reported contributions to magazines or newspapers.

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[34] Randall P. Bezanson, Gilbert Cranberg, and John Soloski. Libel Law and the Press: Myth and Reality (New York: The Free Press, 1987); Sally Engle Merry and Susan S. Silbey, "What Do Plaintiffs Want? Reexamining the Concept of Dispute," The Justice System Journal 9 (1984), 151-179; Sally Engle Merry, "Going to Court," Law and Society Review 13 (1979), 891-923; and Austin Sarat, "Alternatives in Dispute Processing: Litigation in a Small Claims Court," Law and Society Review 10 (1976) 339-351.

The type of person who complained to the councils will also criticize media performance regardless of whether the media listen or cooperate in answering questions about media practices and actions. If journalists are unwilling to participate in a forum that encourages input from those who understand practical and economic constraints on news gathering, they lose a valuable chance to explain their reasons to the most vocal media critics. They also lose the public-relations value of showing that they are willing to allow others to discuss and express opinions about media performance.

Although most news council complainants reported they opposed mandating press responsibility, frustrated efforts to express dissatisfaction about media performance can surface in suggested legislative controls, such as efforts to legislate media responsibility in the early 1970s. During this time, the Washington state legislature discussed a press council appointed by the governor and funded by state government. In Iowa, the American Legion urged formation of a governmental agency to deal with complaints against the media. A Minnesota state representative was preparing to propose a press council "by statute, with the council empowered, if it found against a newspaper, to prohibit receipt of legal advertising for one year. The council would consist of a district judge and a representative of each of the major political parties."[35] These types of governmental control of the media would certainly fall under First Amendment scrutiny, but overturning even unconstitutional legislation takes years of battling in the courts and causes economic and other hardships for the media during the process.

One of the most obvious results of the news council survey was the difference in satisfaction between complainants who made statements at the hearings and those who did not. In Minnesota, most complaints come from the Twin Cities area and involve Twin Cities media. Interaction with media representatives and news council staff involves a local telephone call or a drive down the street. Attendance and participation at hearings is also convenient. The news council has also tried to take out-state hearings to the locality when possible. The difference participation makes was obvious in comments made by respondents in open-ended parts of the survey.

The National News Council faced a number of logistical problems which prevented complainants from actively participating in the process. One problem was the wide geographic area; another was the nature of news suppliers about whom the council invited complaints. Those who complain to a national news council will always face difficulty in personally interacting with the medium involved and with news council staff. Complainants usually live a considerable distance from the medium's and the council's headquarters. A number of National News Council respondents reported they felt left out and they no longer had incentive to care about the news-council process. Several even reported ignorance about the decision until they received a copy as part of the survey. Complainants who feel their efforts are unimportant are unlikely to use the news council again if they have a complaint.

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[35] Alfred Balk, "Minnesota Launches a Press Council," Columbia Journalism Review (November/ December 1971), 25.

Feeling involved in the process is so important that some way to handle cases from various geographic areas must be worked out. Complainants need to participate in the hearings so they will grow to trust the council and learn from the give-and-take that is part of deliberative decision-making. A system that overlooks this need is sure to have many of the problems the National News Council faced. Modern technology provides possible solutions. Such things as teleconferencing during the hearings could allow active participation by individuals in diverse geographic locations and build confidence in the process. The network of news councils and smaller hearing panels would also make it practical to hear cases in diverse geographic locations.

Limitations and strengths of the study

The primary limitation of the study is the small group of respondents. This is caused by the limited number of cases which went to the determination stage and the difficulty of locating complainants. An additional problem with the survey of complainants is the time between complaint and survey. Many of the complainants answered questions about their involvement six, eight or ten years after active involvement in the case. Human memories are distorted with time, but to assist respondents in answering the questions, copies of the determinations were sent with the survey for respondents to review.

In addition, to be able to identify the type of person who used news councils, it would be necessary to identify and contact complainants who made complaints not taken through the complete process. This group makes up the majority of those who complained to the news councils, but identification and location of the approximately 2,500 persons was prohibitive. However, it is necessary to be careful about generalizing from this study. It would be inappropriate to assume responses to the news councils' legal-waiver provision, where complainants were required to agree to give up any rights to sue the media, are representative of all who attempted to use the system. It is speculated that a number of complaints were dropped because the complainant was not willing to sign the waiver.

A major strength of the study is the willingness of respondents to elaborate on their answers. Most respondents were eager to cooperate with the study and a number expressed appreciation for the fact that someone was doing the research. They took great pains to answer as accurately as possible considering the time lapse between most decisions and the survey. Several respondents said they went to attics or basements and pulled their files concerning the complaint.

Another strength of the survey is the number of Minnesota News Council complainants located and represented in the completed surveys. These responses represent reactions over time, and several respondents who have followed the work of the council for years offered comments concerning changes in the process. They offered views as to whether the news council was better or worse than when they complained to it.

Comments concerning whether respondents are glad they made their complaints to the council and whether they would use a council again are particularly interesting. The overwhelming majority of respondents reported being glad they had complained, and almost all gave some explanation for their answer.

The major strength is identification of demographics about complainants. It has long been thought that a news council provides a forum for the average citizen to complain about media performance. The demographics of those who answered the survey indicate this is not true.

It is important to remember that this study is part of an overall search for a system of accountability for the media. While it provides valuable new information for that search, it does not provide specific solutions to the general problem. The goal of the research is to better understand a viable system which has been tried in this country and to use that increased understanding to help in identification of an alternative dispute resolution system for complaints about the media.

Appendix

Summary of Survey Results

General Demographics

The average news council survey respondent was a white male born before 1933 who had at least a master's degree and a household income of more than $50,000 a year. He was at least moderately active in the political process, but his party affiliation or political ideology could not be predicted. Respondents represented 26 states, with only one National News Council respondent from Minnesota. The majority of National News Council respondents were from California, New York and Washington, D.C. All Minnesota respondents lived in Minnesota when the complaint was made, although three have since moved.

The average Minnesota News Council respondent was a younger white male with lower household income and less education than the average National News Council respondent. This indicates the Minnesota News Council was reaching a broader spectrum of society, but when compared to the APME figures, it is obvious even it did not serve a representative number of average- to lower-income members of society. The average respondent from both news councils was far more affluent and better educated than respondents to the AMPE study. Neither council reached minority members of the population in anywhere near representative numbers, with approximately 97 percent of respondents for the news council survey being white, while 13 percent of the APME respondents represented minorities. No National News Council respondents were black, and no Minnesota News Council respondents represented other races in a state with a significant Indian population.

The data revealed that those who followed complaints through to determination were affluent and very well educated. Only 10 percent of the respondents had household incomes of less than $25,000, and only 15.8 percent were not college graduates. This is in sharp contrast to respondents in the APME study where 84 percent were not college graduates, and 65 percent had incomes of less than $25,000.

Political party affiliation, ideology and activity were more balanced, with slightly more than one third of all news council respondents reporting affiliation with Democratic or Republican parties, and one fourth selecting the independent category. Minnesota News Council respondents were slightly more likely to be Democrat, and National News Council respondents were slightly more likely to be Republican than respondents to the APME study. Less than 2 percent of news council respondents reported no political affiliation, while 9 percent of the APME respondents selected "none" . It is important to understand that in Minnesota the state political parties carry names other than the traditional Democrat, Republican and Independent labels. The

Democrat Farmer Labor and the Independent Republican parties are the state parties, and it is difficult to know whether respondents were using the traditional labels in answering the survey.

Minnesota respondents were considerably less likely to be moderate or to claim such labels did not apply to them. They were slightly more likely to be liberal or conservative in political ideology than were National News Council or APME survey respondents. National News Council respondents were more likely to be moderate in philosophy. Minnesota complainants were significantly more likely to be active in the political process, with 67.3 percent reporting they were at least moderately active. Only 48.1 percent of National News Council respondents reported being at least moderately active in the political process. The APME study did not address this question. Respondents from both councils were also very active in volunteer work.

Attitude toward media and free speech

The average news council respondent agreed that the media basically do a good job and are accurate most of the time but felt reporters' values influence their stories, thereby creating bias. Respondents also felt the media often mislead the public. More than 70 percent of respondents felt media often mislead by presenting only part of information individuals need to make decisions. More than 40 percent said the media provide as much accurate information as can be expected considering deadlines, and 58 percent of all news council respondents agreed news media usually act responsibly when collecting information for stories. Overwhelmingly, respondents rejected the statement that television is more believable than newspapers because one can actually see what is happening. These data indicate that although respondents do not think the media are perfect, they are aware of some of the problems inherent in news gathering and approach their use of media with an awareness of the limitations.

More than 63 percent of respondents did not think the First Amendment gives the right to print or say anything desired even if it hurts individuals or groups in society, and almost 75 percent said the First Amendment does not protect advertisers who lie. But more than 73 percent said Americans have the right to make a speech offensive to racial or ethnic groups and to read whatever they want even if others consider the material pornographic. Basically Minnesota and National News Council respondents rated the questions in this section similarly. Minnesota respondents were slightly more likely to say the First Amendment does not protect lying advertisers and slightly less likely to extend free speech to hurting people or to approve of reading pornographic material. This may reflect the level of moral obligation felt by many to be a major part of Minnesota society and recent Minnesota efforts to control the distribution of pornographic materials. These figures indicate respondents from both councils have a concern for social responsibility and an accompanying respect for individual rights, a schizophrenia apparent in most discussions of press freedom. These apparent conflicts also seem to reflect respondents' overwhelming -- almost 73 percent -- support for a free press, even if it is irresponsible.

Preferred sources for news

News council respondents chose newspapers as the best source for news. More than 54 percent of all news council respondents selected newspapers as the preferred source on conflicting reports, and more than 80 percent selected newspapers for local news. The percentage of respondents preferring newspapers for national and international news dropped to 45.7 percent, but newspapers still significantly outranked television, radio and magazines. However, on an overall rating of television's believability, 78.9 percent of news council respondents disagreed with the statement, "Television is more believable than newspapers because you can actually see what is happening." This contrasts with figures in the APME study where more than 50 percent of respondents chose television for all categories.

It is possible the news council data are skewed because the predominate means of publicity for news councils has historically been print media, and those who depend on newspapers would be the ones most likely to know about councils. It should also be noted that broadcasters have been reluctant to endorse the work of the Minnesota or National News Council. Their argument is that they are answerable to the Federal Communications Commission, which receives complaints from the public about broadcasting stations. At this time, there is no way to know what effect the FCC complaint mechanism has on complaints brought to news councils about broadcasters.

It is interesting to note that of the 79 Minnesota News Council determinations as of January 1990, 90.75 percent involved complaints against newspapers, 8.25 percent involved complaints about broadcasting stations, and 1 percent involved a complaint about the media in general.[36] During the first 2 years, the Minnesota News Council accepted complaints only about newspapers and did not accept its first case against a broadcasting medium until 1976. However, since the Council began accepting complaints against broadcasters, few have been brought. By contrast, of the 242 National News Council decisions,[37] 28.1 percent involved complaints against newspapers, 36.8 percent involved broadcasting stations, 12.4 percent involved magazines, 19.4 percent involved news suppliers, and 3.3 percent involved general media.[38]

On conflicting news reports, 54.8 percent of Minnesota News Council and 54.5 percent of National News Council complainants prefer newspapers for believability, but a difference surfaced on the second most popular choice. Of National News Council complainants, 34 percent selected magazines, and most respondents indicated their selection meant news magazines such as Time, Newsweek and US News and World Report. Minnesotans were more likely to prefer radio, with 19.0 percent of respondents indicating radio as their choice. Several Minnesota respondents noted that they depend on public or talk radio rather than regular commercial radio. This result may be explained by the fact that Minnesota has a strong public radio network and also has a 24-hour all-talk station. In the APME study, 50 percent of respondents chose television, 36 percent chose newspapers and 12 percent chose radio.

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[36] Fund-raising flier, Minnesota News Council, Minneapolis, January 1989.

[37] Includes seven complaints involving two separate decisions and one complaint involving three separate decisions.

[38] In the Public Interest III (New York: The National News Council, Inc., 1983), 6, and In the Public Interest Supplement (Minneapolis: Silha Center for the Study of Media Ethics and Law, 1983).

Attitudes about the news councils

The majority of respondents were speaking for themselves when they complained to the council instead of representing organizations, businesses or social causes. Although it has long been argued that a major purpose of news councils is to educate the public about the news-gathering process, respondents did not agree. Although overall respondents agreed the existence of a news council makes the press more responsive, only 22.5 percent agreed that the council's apparent purpose was to explain the media to complainants. Only 23.1 percent reported they learned about how the media operate and 27.3 percent agreed they understand more about how media personnel make decisions concerning news gathering because they made a complaint to the council. However, a considerable difference emerged between the two councils in this area.

In Minnesota, 69.3 percent agreed that news councils make the press more responsive, while 54.3 percent of National News Council complainants agreed with the statement. In addition, 30.6 percent of the Minnesota respondents, where complainants are actively involved in news council hearings, said they learned about how the media operate from the council process, and only 16.4 percent of National News Council respondents, who participated in almost all phases of the complaint process by mail or telephone, reported learning about the media. The discrepancy persists on the increase of understanding of editorial procedures associated with the complaint. Of the Minnesota complainants, 42.8 percent reported an increase in understanding of how the media make decisions and only 30.6 percent reported no increase. Of National News Council respondents, only 14 percent agreed with the statement about increased understanding of how the media make decisions and 68.4 percent of respondents disagreed with the statement. When placed in the context of disputing as a social process expressed by legal researchers,[39] the discrepancies can be explained by the differences in opportunities for involvement in the process for Minnesota and National News Council complainants.

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[39] William L. F. Felstiner, Richard L. Abel, and Austin Sarat. "The Emergence and Transformation of Disputes: Naming, Blaming, Claiming. . . ." Law and Society Review 15 (1981), 631-54; Sally Engle Merry and Susan S. Silbey, "What Do Plaintiffs Want? Reexamining the Concept of Dispute," The Justice System Journal 9 (1984), 151-79.

A large majority of Minnesota News Council respondents, 83.3 percent, rated that council socially valuable. Another 6.3 percent rated the council useful to society. Only 48.3 percent of National News Council respondents rated the council valuable, and another 22.4 percent rated it useful. Minnesota News Council decisions were rated valuable by 67.4 percent of the Minnesota Council respondents and useful by another 13 percent. Only 29.1 percent of National News Council respondents rated the council's decisions valuable, and another 34.5 percent rated them useful. These figures may reflect a greater general awareness of the council throughout the state of Minnesota and the support that council receives from the Minnesota Newspaper Association and the media of the state. In addition, Minnesota respondents were more likely to see stories about the news council than were National News Council respondents.

The general news-council concept fared better than the usefulness of the specific council with which the respondent was involved. Of National News Council respondents, 64.2 percent rated the concept valuable and another 22.6 rated the concept useful to society. Of Minnesota respondents, 81.8 percent rated the concept valuable and 11.4 percent rated it useful. Almost half of Minnesota respondents, 48.9 percent, reported news councils are better than the courts for solving disputes with the media, and 42.2 percent of National News Council respondents agreed. Only 26 percent of all respondents disagreed that news councils are better than courts for resolving disputes with the media.

Over all, two thirds of news council respondents agreed there would have been no one to complain to if there had not been a council. Of those who saw alternatives, the majority listed the courts. If a similar situation arose again and a news council were available, 72 percent of Minnesota and 50 percent of National News Council respondents reported they would use the council. These figures are probably skewed because Minnesotans do actually have a council available to them now, and the National News Council is no longer functioning although the questions asked respondents to assume availability. However, Minnesota respondents could actually foresee the possibility, and National respondents were responding to the hypothetical.

Of all respondents, 40 percent reported they would consider using a council even if there were a fee, but comments respondents placed beside the question indicated most would be very reluctant to pay a fee for a service they perceive to be someone else's responsibility. A large majority of respondents approve of funding news councils through donations from or fees charged to the media, donations from professional media organizations, the public and/or nonprofit organizations. They strongly disapprove of financing news councils through government grants or taxes, and they overwhelmingly disapproved of fees charged to complainants. The opposition to taxes, government grants and fees to complainants, all of which ultimately fall back on the complainant, indicates that respondents either do not see a news council as providing a valuable service or they think someone else should foot the bill for calling socially irresponsible media on the carpet. It's as if respondents feel they have a right to be heard concerning media abuses.

The majority of respondents, 52.3 percent, think media organizations are too powerful for an average person to win against them in any forum. However, Minnesota respondents thought their chances were better than did National News Council respondents. The discrepancy between the councils continued in how complainants saw the outcome of their complaint. Because news council decisions often include split decisions and vague reprimands for parts of the complaint, it is often difficult to evaluate the results on a strictly win/lose basis. Respondents were asked for their perception of the outcome of their decision, and the actual decisions were coded independently by the author to reflect whether the decision was clearly for the media, against the media or some combination thereof. Of Minnesota respondents, 62 percent reported they won their case; 35.7 percent of National News Council respondents thought they won.

In the separate analysis of written Minnesota News Council decisions, 42 percent of the decisions were considered to be for the media, 24 percent included statements for and against the media, and 30 percent against the media. National News Council written decisions were for the media 42.9 percent of the time, for and against 12.9 percent, and against media 32.9 percent. The apparent inconsistency in the responses of Minnesota News Council respondents concerning case outcome, where 62 percent reported they won their case but the independent analysis showed only 30 percent of the decisions against the media, is unexplained. It is possible that Minnesota respondents felt they won if any part of the decision was against the medium.

Overwhelmingly, 92 percent of Minnesota and 71.4 percent of National News Council respondents said they were glad they filed the complaint with the news council, although most of them did not think the news council's decision in their case had a long-term effect on media performance .

The majority, 56 percent, of Minnesota respondents spent between 16 and 50 hours of personal time bringing the complaint through the news council process, and 48.3 percent of National News Council respondent spent one to 15 hours. Most rated the time spent to be about what they expected. The differences in the time spent on the complaint are directly correlated to involvement in the complaint and hearing process. National News Council respondents usually wrote a letter of complaint and may have talked with news council staff by telephone a time or two, and that was all. Minnesota News Council respondents did these and also participated in a hearing that lasted several hours.

More than 80 percent of respondents complained to the councils because they wanted the media to act more responsibly in general coverage and report more accurately in a particular area of news. The complaint, however, was usually about a particular story. More than half of Minnesotans hoped to get the news organization to admit a mistake, run a retraction and stop specific news-reporting practices. Eighty percent of the respondents thought they accomplished at least some of the goals. More than half of National News Council respondents hoped to get the news organization to stop misleading the public and present all sides of the issue in reports. Of National News Council respondents, 44.3 percent thought they accomplished at least some of the goals.

Minnesota News Council respondents talked with a number of people about their complaint during the process. Sixty-eight percent of Minnesota respondents reported discussing the complaint with three or more persons besides council staff and the news organization involved, and another 24 percent talked with one or two other persons. Only 12 percent of National News Council respondents reported discussing the complaint with three or more persons, but 50 percent of them talked with one or two. Thirty-two percent of National News Council respondents reported talking with no one about the complaint, while only 6 percent of Minnesotans reported talking with no one. This means media perceived as irresponsible in Minnesota receive more publicity about the complaint among friends, relatives and coworkers of the complainant, and there is more opportunity for others to get a negative impression of the news organization if they do not cooperate in rectifying a legitimate wrong. It also means that news organizations that do show a willingness to admit and correct mistakes may have additional opportunities to enhance their credibility with Minnesotans.

Concerning the news-council process, respondents indicate news councils are doing a number of things right. A large percentage of respondents from both groups said the process was not intimidating, not too complicated, not too informal nor too time consuming. In Minnesota, 69.4 percent of respondents disagreed with the notion that the council process was too impersonal, and 44.4 percent of National News Council respondents disagreed with the statement, although most National News Council respondents did not have direct personal contact with council staff members. Seventy percent of Minnesota and 38.2 percent of National News Council respondents were satisfied with the speed of the process.

In interpreting these responses, it is very important to point out differences in the procedures of the two councils. Minnesota News Council complainants are actively involved in the process and the hearing. National News Council complainants did everything from a distance, and because of the logistics of investigating complaints and getting the news council together, National News Council decisions tended to take longer. Almost without exception, National News Council complainants did not have a chance to attend hearings. Several National News Council respondents indicated they did not know when the decision was handed down. They made their complaint and felt forgotten. Two even said the copy of the decision they received with this survey was the first they had seen of the decision. Several indicated that because they felt they made no contribution to the process, they saw the council as a waste of time.

More than half of all respondents (57.8 percent) thought the news council process was fair, with 62.6 percent of the Minnesota News Council and 53.7 percent of the National News Council respondents agreeing. In addition, 46.6 percent of all respondents (53.1 percent of Minnesota and 41.1 percent of National News Council respondents) disagreed with a statement that the council was biased toward the media. This was interesting in light of the pains some respondents took to make lengthy statements about news council bias when asked to make open-ended comments on the survey. Only 12.5 percent of all respondents thought the media organization was given more opportunity to present its side of the case.

More than half of all respondents agreed that council members carefully considered both sides of the issue and were thorough enough to learn the truth. Fifty percent of all respondents were satisfied with the decision in the case, 54.1 percent were satisfied with the way the case was handled by the news council, and 52.5 percent were satisfied with the overall news-council process. Minnesotans were better satisfied in all three areas, with 62 percent satisfied with the decision, 76 percent satisfied with the way the case was handled and 74 percent satisfied with the overall news-council process. Again, this can be logically be explained through the idea of disputing as a social process. Those who invest more in the process and have more opportunity to affect the outcome are more likely to be satisfied with the results.

Respondents do not think attorneys should be used in hearings, with 81.7 percent of Minnesota and 79.6 percent of National News Council respondents disagreeing with the statement "Attorneys should be used by all parties when the complaint is presented before the council." In Minnesota, 34 percent of non-attorney respondents did contact an attorney before complaint or during the process, and 18 percent were told by an attorney they had a complaint that could be taken to court. Ten percent of National News Council respondents contacted an attorney before complaining to the council, during the process or after the decision, and 2.9 percent were told by an attorney they had a case that could be taken to court. Twenty-four percent of Minnesota and 8.1 percent of National News Council respondents were attorneys.

Approximately one-third of the respondents did not think the legal waiver required by the news council was fair. Their reasons included the view that the waiver was too broad and closed all doors to additional remedies and that the media organization could theoretically still sue the complainant. Of the 43.3 percent who did think the legal waiver was fair, several reported they thought so because they were unwilling to spend the money to sue or they saw signing the waiver as the only way to be heard.

Respondents were almost equally divided on whether news councils should be able to fine irresponsible media, with 41.7 percent saying they should and 40.7 percent saying they should not. Minnesota respondents were slightly more likely to favor fines and National News Council respondents were slightly more likely to oppose fining the media. The majority reported that they did not think the subject of the story they complained about should have received money to compensate for the wrong done by the media. Both groups, however, overwhelmingly agreed that news councils should be able to require the media to run an apology, with 76.6 percent of Minnesota and 75.9 percent of National News Council respondents agreeing with the statement. This is consistent with respondents' purposes for complaining to the council and with the legal concept of retraction in mitigation of damages.

Attitudes about media's response to complaints

In contrast to respondents' favorable ratings of the news-council process, they were harsh on the media's response to their complaint. More than 50 percent of Minnesota respondents, who are required by the news council to try to settle the dispute before the council will hear the complaint, found the medium to be more than a little hostile, arrogant, annoyed and defensive when the respondent presented concerns about coverage. In addition, at least 48 percent found the medium to be unconcerned, uncooperative, unapologetic, unresponsive and unsympathetic. Of National News Council respondents, who had less opportunity to deal directly with the media organization, more than 40 percent found the medium to be at least a little hostile, arrogant, annoyed and defensive when the respondent's concerns were expressed.

Fifty percent of Minnesota and 30 percent of National News Council respondents said the media representatives were courteous, and 62 percent of Minnesota and 37.2 percent of National News Council respondents said that the media representatives were polite when the medium was contacted. But that was not enough to offset the negative attitudes respondents encountered, especially for Minnesota respondents. Sixty-four percent of Minnesota and 28.6 percent of National News Council respondents said the attitude of the media had a major effect on their decision to complain to the council. One hundred percent of Minnesota and 78.8 percent of National News Council respondents said the attitude of the media had at least a little effect on their decision to go to the council.

Concerning the medium's response to the news-council process, 46 percent of Minnesota and 37.1 percent of National News Council respondents were dissatisfied. Concerning the medium's response to the decision, 54 percent of Minnesotans were dissatisfied, as were 38.6 percent of National News Council respondents. More Minnesotans, 58 percent, were satisfied with the publicity the news council decision received, but only 14.3 percent of National News Council respondents were satisfied. Minnesotans, of course, have more opportunity to see publicity about the decision because of the smaller geographic area covered by the council and the support of the news council by the Minnesota Newspaper Association.

Correlations

When answers to questions are compared with each other, some interesting relationships surface. Predictably, respondents who reported they won their case before the news council were satisfied with the way the case was handled, with 89.5 percent reporting they were satisfied or very satisfied. Of the 58.8 percent of respondents who reported they would use the council again if one were available, 74.6 percent of them were satisfied with the decision.

Respondents who reported satisfaction with how the case was handled and with the decision were much more likely to say they would use a council if there were a fee. Seventy-five percent of respondents who reported they were satisfied with the decision said they would pay to use the council, while only 36.2 percent of those who were dissatisfied with the decision would do so. Of the respondents who were satisfied with the way the case was handled, 80.4 percent would consider paying to use a council. Only 45.3 percent of those who were dissatisfied with how the case was handled would consider a fee.

But other relationships also surfaced. Of those who made statements and actively participated in the hearing, 76.6 percent reported satisfaction and 19.1 percent reported dissatisfaction with the overall news-council process, 61.7 percent reported satisfaction with the decision of the council and 70.8 percent reported satisfaction with the speed of the decision. Of those who did not make a statement at the hearing, only 47.8 percent reported satisfaction with the overall process, 48.1 percent reported satisfaction with the decision and 42 percent reported satisfaction with the speed of the decision.

These results support the theory that being able to participate actively in the hearing increases chances that the complainant will be satisfied with the overall process and the news council decision. This is particularly important since those who complained to the National News Council were seldom able to participate in the hearing, and Minnesota News Council respondents, who were much more involved in the process, were twice as likely to be satisfied with the overall process.

Of respondents who reported contacting an attorney about the complaint, 70.8 percent were satisfied with the decision, 75 percent were satisfied with the way the case was handled by the news council and 79.2 percent were satisfied with the overall news council process. Of respondents who were told by attorneys their case was strong enough to take to court, 81.8 percent were satisfied with the speed of the news council decision. And of those who reported they could have won if they had sued the media over the complaint, 72.7 percent were satisfied with how the case was handled. Of the complainants who were attorneys, 58.8 percent were satisfied with the overall news-council process. These figures indicate that the news council process can provide satisfactory resolution to cases that might go to court if the council did not exist.

High correlations were also found between satisfaction with the overall news council process and whether respondent felt the council considered both sides of the issue, was thorough enough to learn the truth, and whether the decision was perceived to have a long-term effect on media performance. Satisfaction with how the case was handled was also correlated with whether the respondent felt the council had considered both sides of the issue.

Respondents' perceptions about whether the decision had a long-term effect appears to be related to satisfaction with how the case was handled by the council, the media's response to the decision and satisfaction with the publicity the decision received.

Allegations about Sexually Explicit Materials and Attitudes Toward Controversial Media Contents

ABSTRACT

Civil libertarians fear that scientific or testimonial evidence linking socially undesirable behavior to sexually explicit materials could provide a justification or rationalization for censorship and other forms of legal restriction of implicated media content. To date, virtually no social-scientific research has assessed the impact of allegations about harm linked to media content. This study examines experimentally the possible effects of scientific and testimonial claims about sexually explicit materials on attitudes both toward the legal restriction of implicated media contents and toward restriction of controversial materials not implicated in a message. The experiment employed after-only design. Respondents received one of three versions of a booklet. Those in the control group received no information about sexually explicit materials. Respondents in a second condition read three news stories reporting social-scientific evidence of harmful effects linked to nonviolent and violent sexual materials. Those in the third condition read two news stories that reported testimonial evidence from Ted Bundy and Linda Lovelace. Data were analyzed using the method of planned comparisons and two-tailed test statistics. The contrasts of interest were between the control group and each treatment condition. Results indicated that both social scientific and testimonial claims about harmful effects of sexually explicit materials are likely to contribute to greater agreement with bans on the availability of sexual media contents to adults. Analyses also indicated that the social scientific claims, but evidently not the testimonial ones, resulted in generalized restrictive attitudes toward unimplicated controversial materials. The paper also discusses possible theoretical interpretations of the findings.

Allegations about Sexually Explicit Materials and Attitudes toward Controversial Media Contents

By David K. Perry and Joseph Plumley

College of Communication

The University of Alabama

P.O. Box 870172

Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0172

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Allegations about Sexually Explicit Materials and Attitudes toward Controversial Media Contents

Throughout history, controversy about the availability of sexually explicit materials has existed. Polls suggest that U.S. public opinion today is divided, but substantial and in some instances growing percentages favor partial or complete legal restrictions on sales to adults of various types of sexually oriented communication.[1] Support for restriction seems especially high among older persons, religious evangelicals, and women. In many cases, persons supporting legal restriction apparently rely upon intuitive assumptions about the effects of the content. Nonetheless, a growing body of often contradictory effects research is available. Partisans to the debate can cite selectively the radically different conclusions reached by two U.S. government commissions appointed to study the impact of erotica and pornography.[2] Academicians, including those conducting salient effects research in this area, also frequently disagree about its substance and meaning.[3]

Those concerned about sexually explicit material can base their position upon more than their own intuition or formal research evidence. Supposed victims of the erotica industry sometimes make widely publicized claims, as well. For example, the night before his execution, mass murderer Theodore Bundy alleged that exposure to sexually violent materials contributed to his criminal behavior. Linda Lovelace, one of the stars of "Deep Throat," claimed that her then-husband forced her to engage in filmed sexual activity.[4] Of course, Lovelace's allegations involve effects on those drawn into the sex industry, rather than on audiences.

Civil libertarians fear that scientific or testimonial evidence linking socially undesirable behavior to sexually explicit materials could provide a justification or rationalization for censorship and other forms of legal restriction of implicated media content. To date, virtually no social-scientific research has assessed the impact of allegations about harm linked to media content.[5] The present study will examine experimentally the possible effects of social scientific and testimonial claims about sexually explicit materials on attitudes toward the legal restriction of implicated media contents.

The study also will assess any impact of such communication on attitudes toward controversial materials not implicated directly in a message. Social psychologist William McGuire, a prominent figure in attitude research, has called for more research into the impact of persuasive communications on related attitudes not mentioned in a message.[6] It is possible that allegations about sexual materials will affect attitudes toward restriction of other forms of controversial content, as well. This could be important because civil libertarians fear that once censorship is accepted in one domain, society starts down an unpredictable "slippery slope" of additional restriction.

Theoretical Background

Various theoretical ideas imply different effects from exposure to claims about harm linked to sexual materials. The common-sense, "you-are-what-you-eat" expectation would be that exposure to claims of harmful effects would lead to greater advocacy of legal restriction toward the implicated content. This assumes that persons who are aware of such claims will tend to believe them, or at least not discount them entirely. It also assumes that people believing that certain media content has harmful effects therefore will favor more restriction than will others. Possible differences in credibility between social scientific and testimonial evidence, however, might affect the degree or presence of any resulting change. It is even conceivable that audiences would find certain sources so low in believability that a "boomerang" effect would contribute to less-restrictive attitudes.[7] Testimonial allegations, such as those of Bundy and Lovelace, seem especially open to such doubt.

Contradictory predictions also can arise with reference to attitudes toward unimplicated materials. Generalization of restrictive opinions could occur because a person who believes that a specific effect is likely or plausible might attach more credibility to claims about other harmful effects of media content that the person has heard or can imagine. On the other hand, people might be willing to tolerate only so much restriction (or even so much nonrestriction) of controversial materials. In this case, greater (or lesser) tolerance of unimplicated, controversial materials might follow from increased (or decreased) sympathy toward legal restriction of sexual media contents.

One related, but correlational, study was conducted about five weeks after the state of Florida executed Bundy.[8] It tested a prediction that persons knowledgeable of Bundy's claims would be more likely to favor legal restriction on sales to adults of both the implicated content and of other forms of controversial material, as well. The study used a convenience sample of 107 students. The first aspect of the prediction received corroboration: students who recalled Bundy's claims expressed more-restrictive opinions toward sales of visually sexual media contents. The data provided no evidence of generalization of restrictive attitudes to unimplicated domains, however. In fact, those aware of Bundy's claims actually expressed more-tolerant opinions toward sales of books containing racist and sexist language. Two interpretations seem especially plausible. First, knowledge of the claims possibly made people less willing to tolerate legally the implicated materials. In addition, perhaps respondents who knew of Bundy's claims offset their greater advocacy of restriction of sexual contents by adopting more-tolerant attitudes toward certain other materials. Second, the findings may indicate the presence of selective exposure or retention. Ideologically conservative students, who might express greater tolerance for racist and sexist language and less for erotic materials than would others, possibly were more likely to learn or remember Bundy's politically congenial claims.

Experimental research can clarify such ambiguities in causal direction. Because existent theory and prior research do not yield clear expectations, no directional hypotheses will be stated. Rather, this research will examine the following questions:

Q1: Will exposure to news reporting social-scientific evidence or testimonial claims about harmful effects linked to sexually explicit materials affect a person's agreement with legal restriction of these contents?

Q2: Will such exposure affect agreement with restriction of controversial materials other than those implicated?

Method

Design. The experiment employed an after-only design. Respondents received one of three versions of a booklet. Those in the control group received no information about sexually explicit materials. Respondents in a second condition read three news stories reporting social-scientific evidence of harmful effects linked to nonviolent and violent sexual materials (see Appendix A).[9] Those in the third condition read two news stories that reported testimonial evidence from Bundy and Lovelace (see Appendix B).[10] Data were analyzed using the method of planned comparisons and two-tailed test statistics. The contrasts of interest were between the control group and each treatment condition.

Procedure. The 93 respondents were enrolled in communication and advanced military science classes during the summer of 1989 at a major state university in the South. About 55% were female. The experimenter handed out booklets containing the different manipulations in randomized combinations to intact classes. Participants were assured of anonymity and informed that they could stop their participation at any time. The booklets informed them that the study involved opinions that people have about certain issues in the news. After answering all questions, students were informed that other evidence and studies contradicted some of the claims contained in the news stories. Following all experimental administrations, the students received information about its purpose and an opportunity to contact the investigators with any questions they might have.

Attitudes toward Legal Restriction. After exposure to any experimental treatment, respondents indicated their agreement, using Likert-type items, to 30 statements. Their responses concerned separate statements advocating a ban on sales to or viewing by adults and adolescents of 15 types of controversial media content. Responses were coded with a range from 1 for "strongly disagree" to 5 for "strongly agree." All statements used similar wording: e.g., "Books that use words to describe explicit sexual acts should be banned for sale to adults." In addition to books describing sexual acts, four of the other items concerned bans on explicitly sexual materials: viewing motion pictures that depict sexual violence, viewing of motion pictures depicting Christ as sexually active, sales of magazines that show adults having sexual relations, and sales of magazines that show sexual acts involving children. Five statements could be objectionable for reasons unrelated to the manipulations: sales of books that advocate devil worship, books that contain racist language, books that glorify illegal drugs, books that describe women as inferior to men, and books presenting a favorable image of U.S. Communists. Because of concerns about ambiguity, the other five sets of statements were eliminated as part of this study.[11] In designing the questionnaire, the order of the 15 pairs of statements was randomized, and participants answered the statements in the same order. Respondents reacted to the statement concerning each type of content with reference to adults immediately before responding concerning adolescents (see Appendix C).

Results

To simplify data analyses, separate principal components analyses, with oblique rotation, were performed on the dependent-variable items concerning sexually explicit and unrelated, but controversial, media contents.[12] A three-factor solution emerged for the sexually explicit items. One factor reflected support for restrictions on the availability to adults of sexual media contents. Items loading on it pertained to sales of books that use words to describe explicit sex, viewing of motion pictures that depict sexual violence, and sales of magazines that show adults having sexual relations. A second factor reflected support of restriction on availability to adolescents of the very same materials. The same items, worded in terms of adolescents, loaded on this factor. A final factor reflected the availability of child pornography. Two items, concerning sales to adults or adolescents of magazines that show sexual acts involving children, loaded. Simple structure resulted only after the items concerning the availability of motion pictures that depict Christ as sexually active were deleted from the components analysis.

Two factors emerged from the components analysis of the items concerning unrelated media contents. Four items, concerning the sales to adults or adolescents of books presenting a favorable image of U.S. Communists and of books that contain racist language, loaded on one factor. We termed this factor restriction of politically controversial books. Four items reflecting sales to adults or adolescents of books advocating devil worship or glorifying illegal drugs loaded on the second factor. We termed this factor restriction of books advocating countercultural ideas. Simple structure resulted only after the two items concerning restriction of books describing women as inferior to men were deleted from the analysis.

We created dependent variable indices by averaging each respondent's reaction to all items loading on a factor. Table 1 contains the results of the data analyses.

Table 1 About Here

The analyses indicated that both social scientific and testimonial claims about harmful effects of sexually explicit materials are likely to contribute to greater agreement with bans on the availability of sexual media contents to adults. Only the testimonial manipulations, however, appeared to contribute to greater agreement with bans on adolescent sales or viewing of sexual materials. Neither manipulation appeared to affect attitudes toward restriction of child pornography.

Results also indicated that the social scientific claims, but evidently not the testimonial ones, resulted in generalized restrictive attitudes toward unimplicated controversial materials.

Discussion

The present study investigated experimentally whether news of social-scientific or testimonial allegations about harmful effects linked to sexually oriented media contents affect agreement with legal restriction of controversial materials. The evidence indicated that both types of allegation can lead to more restrictive attitudes toward certain implicated materials. It also indicated that people exposed to social scientific allegations may generalize beyond the material implicated and become less tolerant of unrelated, but controversial, media contents, as well.

The fact that the testimonial, but not social scientific, evidence appeared to affect attitudes concerning adolescent viewing or purchase of sexual materials probably is explained by the fact that the Bundy testimonial mentioned his exposure to sexual materials as a child. The failure to find an impact of the manipulations on magazines containing child pornography probably occurred because respondents tended to agree with restriction of these. In certain cases (e.g., restriction of sexual materials for adults) in which significant effects occurred, the manipulations did not create unambiguous advocacy of restriction, in the aggregate. The center of gravity (the mean) sometimes shifted from clear disagreement with legal restriction (among those in a control group) toward a less-committed position.

Because all questionnaire items used the same scale, a response set could explain evidence of generalization of restrictive attitudes to unimplicated materials. A pure response-set interpretation, which would assume that respondents reacted in much the same way to all items regardless of their content, seems unlikely. Clearly, they tended to differentiate between such things as sexual materials featuring children and adults, as well as items sold to adults and adolescents. In addition, generalization from sexual to unrelated materials occurred only among social-science respondents. Perhaps reading relatively credible social-science claims and then reacting to sexually explicit materials may have interacted to make respondent assumptions about effects of other items especially salient to them.[13] In other words, responding to sexual materials perhaps magnified any effect of the social-science manipulations on attitudes toward unrelated, but controversial items. Such enhancement can be a desirable characteristic of experimental research aimed at what can happen, but it may overstate what would occur in "natural" circumstances if respondents express opinions only about non-sexual materials. An important question, left unanswered by this research, is whether such generalization to unrelated media contents occurs only in the short term.

Still another question involves whether generalizations about controversial contents are entirely unjustifiable. Evidence of media effects of one type certainly can increase interest in hypotheses about related effects. On the other hand, untested hypotheses should not determine public policy. Of course, even trained scientists commit similar leaps of judgment.[14] For example, past limited effects generalizations about mass communication[15] probably have constrained funding for unresearched domains, and trained researchers sometimes over-generalize laboratory findings.

The import of these effects depends upon whether persons making decisions about the availability of media contents respond to public opinion. Formal evidence exists that prosecutors are more likely to file obscenity charges when they perceive that sexually explicit materials are a major public concern.[16] Anecdotal evidence, such as the refusal of some video businesses to carry "The Last Temptation of Christ," also suggests that perceived opposition often may cause retailers to avoid even clearly protected, but controversial, materials.

What are the implications of this research for journalistic practice? First, journalists should strive to interpret social scientific and testimonial allegations. Reports of social scientific studies, for example, can emphasize their limitations (e.g., that laboratory aggression may have little in common with sexual violence in the "real" world). Interpretive analyses of its scientific value (or lack thereof) could accompany testimonial evidence such as Bundy's.

Nonetheless, to the extent that people base their judgments on salient and unusual events, rather than more typical ones,[17] such interpretation may have only marginal effects.

Of course, this initial experiment suggests more questions than it answers. Additional research could assess the extent to which the patterns reported here hold up over time. In addition, effects of claims about other forms of controversial content such as violent television also need study.

Notes

[1] "Growing Support Found for Ban on Sex Violence in Movies, Magazines," Gallup Report No. 251:2-10 (August 1986).

[2] Commission on Obscenity and Pornography. The Report of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography. (New York: Bantam, 1970). Attorney General's Commission on Pornography. Final Report. Vols. 1 and 2. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, 1986). See also the exchange between Daniel Linz and Edward Donnerstein, on the one hand, and Dolf Zillmann and Jennings Bryant, "The Methods and Merits of Pornography Research," Journal of Communication, 38:180-192 (Spring 1988).

[3] See, for example: Larry Gross, "Serious Questions...," Journal of Communication, 33:107-111 (Autumn, 1983). Dolf Zillmann and Jennings Bryant, "...higher moralities," Journal of Communication, 33:111-114 (Autumn 1983).

[4] Linda Lovelace (with Mike McGrady). Ordeal. (Secaucus, N.Y.: Citadel Press, 1980)

[5] For an examination of what mass communication scholars think about media effects, see Carl Bybee, James D. Robinson, and Joseph Turow, "The Effects of Television on Children: What the Experts Believe," Communication Research Reports, 2:149-154 (December 1985).

[6] William J. McGuire, "The Vicissitudes of Attitudes and Similar Representational Constructs in Twentieth Century Psychology," European Journal of Social Psychology, 16:89-130 (April-June 1986).

[7] Carl I. Hovland, Irving L. Janis, and Harold H. Kelley. Communication and Persuasion. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953).

[8] David K. Perry and William Melson, "The Bundy 'Confession' and

Attitudes toward Legal Restriction of Controversial Materials," Communication Research Reports 2: (December, 1989).

[9] One story reported research linking filmed sexual violence with enhanced aggression toward women, one concerned evidence linking repeated exposure to nonviolent filmed heterosex to tendencies to recommend light sentences for rapists, and a final one reported evidence that rapes occur more frequently in states in which men's magazines (such as Hustler and Playboy) are popular. These items were edited versions of stories originally appearing in The Boston Globe, The Los Angeles Times, and The New York Times. The booklets indicated the original source of each story.

[10] The Bundy story was an edited version of a wire service account published in a local newspaper shortly after his execution. The Lovelace piece was a considerably edited and shortened version of a story published originally in Ms. magazine. The booklets informed respondents of the original sources of the stories.

[11] Certain of the deleted items concerned nonsexual but violent forms of media content and were not reported because some of the story manipulations concerned sexual violence in the media. Others concerned controversial materials (such as X-rated movies) that are likely, but not inevitably, to be sexual.

[12] In all components analysis, items with a loading of .5 or better were deemed to load on a factor. Factors with eigenvalues of greater than 1 were extracted for use in analyses. Details of the components analysis are available from the first author.

[13] The first four items on the questionnaire concerned books that use words to describe explicit sexual acts and motion pictures that

depict sexual violence. Therefore, respondents reacted to sexual items before reaching any unrelated item. For evidence concerning this sort of possible "context effect" in questionnaires, see Roger Tourangeau, Kenneth A. Rasinski, Norman Bradburn, and Roy D'Andrade, "Carryover Effects in Attitude Surveys," Public Opinion Quarterly, 53:495-524 (Fall 1989).

[14] Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, "Belief in the Law of Small Numbers," Psychological Bulletin, 76: 105-110 (August 1971).

[15] Joseph Klapper, The Effects of Mass Communication. (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1960).

[16] David Pritchard, Jon Paul Dilts, and Dan Berkowitz, "Prosecutors' Use of External Agendas in Prosecuting Pornography Cases," Journalism Quarterly, 64:392-398 (Summer-Autumn 1987).

[17] Ruth Hamill, Timothy D. Wilson, and Richard E. Nisbett, "Insensitivity to Sample Bias: Generalizing from Atypical Cases," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 39:578-589 (October 1980).

TABLE 1

Mean responses to dependent variable indices by experimental group.

	Control n= 30 Mean	Testimonial n = 31 Mean	Social Science n = 32 Mean
1. Restriction of sexual material for adults.	1.77	2.32[a]	2.62[b]
2. Restriction of sexual material for adolescents.	3.70	4.21[a]	4.01
3. Restriction of child pornography.	4.67	4.48	4.54
4. Restriction of politically controversial books.	2.32	2.54	3.06[b]
5. Restriction of books advocating counter-cultural ideas.	3.43	3.59	3.96[b]

Note: Larger means indicate greater advocacy of restriction. Dependent variable indices each had a range from 1 to 5.

[a] Contrast between the testimonial group and the control group is significant at $p<.05$,two-tailed.

[b] Contrast between the social science group and the control group is significant at $p<.05$,two-tailed.

Appendix A

Stories read by social-science subjects

PLEASE CAREFULLY READ THE NEWS STORY BELOW.

Study shows porn film violence against women may lead to criminal behavior

Violence against women depicted in pornographic films may lead to criminal behavior, several recent studies suggest. The new research demonstrates that pornography portraying sex in combination with violence contributes to an individual's tendency toward aggression.

The new studies raise questions regarding the conclusions reached more than a decade ago by the Presidential Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, whose report exonerated pornography as a cause of antisocial behavior.

The discussion of pornography's role in violent behavior has gained recent impetus from reports of increased physical assauts against women. A factor in the attacks, some psychiatrists suspect, may be the increase in depictions of violence against women in general-distribution films, as well as in X-rated movies.

Two studies demonstrating at least a temporary increase of male aggressiveness against females, after the viewing of sexual violence, were described at the convention of the American Psychological Association held this month in Montreal.

In one, reported by Dr. Edward Donnerstein of the University of Wisconsin, induced aggressiveness was measured in terms of the number of electric shocks the subject gave to a male or female confederate. It was found that men who had watched sexual violence were likely to administer more electric shocks than those who had watched nonviolent sexual films. They were also more aggressive against female partners than against males.

The men who had viewed nonviolent sexual films did not become significantly more aggressive toward women. But the aggression of men toward men was moderately heightened by those films. The researchers suggest that they aggression toward women was muted following these films because of cultural inhibitions regarding women.

In the other study, conducted by Drs. Neil Malamuth and James V. Check at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, the effects of pornographic violence were assessed in responses to a lengthy questionaire, and the findings indicated that heightened aggressiveness persists for at least a week.

A number of psychologists believe rape is motivated more by rage than by sexual desire. The Wisconsin study was financed by the National Institute of Mental Health, which has recently concluded than an understanding of the conditions which lead to sexual attacks against women is a major goal for research.

From The New York Times.

WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED READING THE STORY, PLEASE TURN THE PAGE. DO NOT TURN BACK TO THIS PAGE AGAIN.

PLEASE CAREFULLY READ THE NEWS STORY BELOW.

Study Finds Rape Rate Tied to Sex Magazines

Los Angeles

Rape occurs more frequently in states where sex magazines are popular, social scientists said here yesterday.

Larry Barron, a Yale University sociologist, and Dr. Murray A. Straus of the Family Research Laboratory at the University of New Hampshire, presented their conclusions at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Barron and Straus found after examining FBI crime statistics that Nevada, Alaska and California have the highest incidence of rape - ranging from 58 cases reported per 100,000 population in California to 67 cases reported per 100,000 population in Nevada.

The states with the lowest incidence of rape cases are Maine, South Dakota and North Dakota, where reported cases run from 13 to fewer than 10 per 100,000, the FBI figures show.

The researchers compiled a state-by-state index of what they called "legitimate violence," which they defined as behavior patterns that are considered socially acceptable.

These include such factors as corporal punishment authorized in schools, acceptance of violent crime control methods, widespread support for military activities, popularity of violent sports and the existence of communities where racial discrimination and other forms of "social disorganization" are widespread.

Barron and Straus found the highest correlation between the sales of sex magazines and rape rates.

Examining the sales of Hustler, Chic, Club, Forum, Gallery, Oui, Genesis and Playboy, the researchers found that the circulation of the magazines in the states with the highest incidence of rape is more than double what it is in states that rank among the lowest in rapes.

The researchers do not contend that reading sex magazines actually leads to rape, but that the magazines themselves tend to "legitimate" violent sexual activity against women.

Other issues the researchers correlated with rape was the degree to which women encounter widespread discrimination in the job market, and the incidence of divorce, which Barron and Straus say they believe leads men to "harbor feelings of anger, contempt and hostility" toward their ex-wives.

David Perlman

From the Los Angeles Times

WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED READING THE STORY, PLEASE TURN THE PAGE. DO NOT TURN BACK TO THIS PAGE AGAIN.

PLEASE CAREFULLY READ THE NEWS STORY BELOW.

After 36 Erotic films, Test Groups Go Easier on Rapist

The Boston Globe

The more pornography men and women are exposed to the less they consider rape a serious crime, according to a recent study.

Eighty male and 80 female college undergraduates were randomly assigned to one of three groups. Over the six weeks of the study, a "massive exposure" group saw 36 erotic films, each about eight minutes long: an "intermediate exposure" group saw 18 erotic and 18 non-erotic films, all also lasting about eight minutes: and a "no exposure" group saw 36 non-erotic films of the same length. (A control group saw no films at all.)

The researchers asked members of the various groups to suggest an appropriate prison term in the case of a local man who had been convicted of raping a hitchhiker but had not yet been sentenced. Men from the "no exposure" group recommended sentences averaging 94 months nearly twice as long as the 49-month sentence recommended by the men in the "massive exposure" group.

The results for women were similar, though women from both groups suggested longer prison sentences than men had. Women from the "massive exposure" group recommended sentences of 77 months, those from the "no exposure" group recommended 143-month sentences.

All the erotic films depicted heterosexual, non-violent activities. The non-erotic films had been judged to be interesting and did not "depict or make reference to sex-related behaviors."

WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED READING THE STORY, PLEASE TURN THE PAGE. DO NOT TURN BACK TO THIS PAGE AGAIN.

Appendix B

Stories read by testimonial subjects

PLEASE CAREFULLY READ THE NEWS STORY BELOW.

Bundy warns of porn's danger

> "I don't want to die, I'm not going to kid you. ...(but) I deserve, certainly, the most extreme punishment society has. I think society seserves to be protected from me and others like me."
>
> Theodore Bundy

STARKE, Fla. (AP) - Hours before his execution, Ted Bundy cooly traced his origins as a serial killer, describing how boyhood glimpses of violent pornography became "an addiction" that grew until his "destructive energy" exploded from fantasy into reality.

The 42-year old law school dropout, whose bizarre mixture of intelligence, charm and homicidal bloodlet were the subject of five books and a TV movie, also warned before his execution Tuesday that there were others like himself.

"There are loose in the towns and their communities people like me today whose dangerous impulses are being fueled day in, day out, by violence in the media...particularly sexual violence," Bundy said in a videotaped interview Monday.

Bundy, who after a decade of denial told detectives from four states that he had murdered 23 young women since the mid 1970's, said he deserved his punishment. His execution in the electric chair at Florida State Prison elicited cheers from more than 100 people who stoood in a field across from the penitentiary.

"I don't want to die, I'm not going to kid you (but) I deserve, certainly, the most extreme punishment society has. I think society deserves to be protected from me and from others like me," Bundy said in the interview with James Dobson, a religious broadcaster and psychologist.

He said between sobs he hoped the interview would spur society to protect itself from the widespread influence of pornography, TV violence and X-rated movies.

Although he said he felt remorse for the sex-related murders, which authorities believe could total 36 nationwide, Bundy said, "There is no way in the world that killing me is going to restore those beautiful children to their parents."

Handcuffed and sitting at a table across from Dobson, Bundy alternately sobbed and smiled during the 29-minute interview. He was dressed in the peach-colored, short-sleeved shirt worn by Death Row inmates.

He appeared to ponder each question carefully, sometimes pausing at length before answering articulately.

Dobson, who has a daily radio program heard on 1,200 radio stations, asked about the rape and murder of 12-year-old Kimberly Leach, for which Bundy was executed.

"What did you feel after that?" Dobson asked.

Bundy held his hands to his face, closed his eyes and thought for a long time before responding: "I can't talk about that right now...It's too painful...I can't begin to understand the pain that the parents of these children (felt).

"I don't ask them to forgive me. I'm not asking for it. That kind of forgiveness is of God."

Prodded by Dobson to explore the source of his violence, Bundy said that during his murder rampages "the unique thing about how this worked...is I still felt in my regular life the full range of guilt and remorse about other things."

He emphasized he didn't blame pornography for his actions and took full responsibility. But he said hard-core pornography, fueled by alcohol "guided and shaped" what he did.

"I have lived in prison for a long time now, and I've met a lot of men who were motivated to violence just like me. And without exception, every one of them was deeply involved in pornography," he said.

Claiming he was "essentially a normal person" who grew up in a good home, Bundy said:

"People need to recognize...those of us who are or who have been so much influenced by violence in the media, in particular pornographic violence, are not some kind of inherent monsters. We are your sons and we are your husbands and we grew up in regular families. And pornography can reach out and snatch a kid out of any house today."

But Dr. Dorothy Otnow Lewis, a phychiatrist who examined Bundy as part of a last-ditch attempt to save him from execution, said Bundy's first home was that of his maternal grandparents, with a grandfather who was "an extremely violent and frightening individual." The grandfather would kick dogs, swing cats by their tails, beat people who angered him and read pornography voraciously, the New Haven, Conn., psychiatrist said.

Lewis said a cousin told her that when Bundy was a preschooler in the home in Philadelphia, he used to sneak into a greenhouse where his grandfather's pornography was kept and read it.

In the interview, Bundy said his desire to murder "happened in stages, gradually...Once you become addicted to (pornography), and I look at this as a kind of addiction like other kinds of addiction, I would keep looking for more potent, more explicit, more graphic kinds of material.

"You keep craving something that is harder, harder, something which gives you a greater sense of excitement. Until you reach a point where the pornography only goes so far, you reach that jumping-off point where you begin to wonder if maybe actually doing it would give you that which is beyond just reading it or looking at it.

"In the beginning it fuels this kind of thought process, then at a certain time, it is instrumental, I would say crystallizing, making into something which is almost like a separate entity inside. ... a building up of this destructive energy."

After committing his first murder, Bundy said, he was "absolutely horrified that I was capable of doing something like that."

"It was like coming out of some horrible trance," Bundy said. "It was like being possessed by something so awful, so alien.

"But then the impulse to do it again would come back even stronger."

From the Tuscaloosa News

WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED READING THE STORY, PLEASE TURN THE PAGE. DO NOT TURN BACK TO THIS PAGE AGAIN.

PLEASE CAREFULLY READ THE NEWS STORY BELOW.

The *Ordeal* of Linda Lovelace

Remember "Deep Throat"? It was the porn movie that made porn movies look chic; the stag film that took only $40,000 and a few days to make in 1972, and ended the decade with an estimated gross income of $600 million from the film itself, plus the subindustry of sequels, cassettes, T-shirts, bumper stickers, and sexual aids that it inspired.

At the heart of things was Linda Lovelace, whose innocent face offered moviegoers the titillating thought that even the girl-next-door might be the object of porn-style sex.

Using Linda had been the idea of Gerry Damianco, the director-writer of "Deep Throat." "The most amazing thing about Linda, the truly amazing thing," she remembers his saying enthusiastically to Lou Peraino, who bankrolled the movie, "is that she still looks sweet and innocent." Nonetheless, Peraino (recently arrested by the FBI as an alleged figure in organized crime activities in the illicit film industry) complained that Linda wasn't the blonde that he had wanted for his first porn flick, and he continued to complain, even after she was ordered to service him sexually.

In fact, watching Linda perform as a prostitute had given Damianco the idea for "Deep Throat" in the first place. He had been at a party where men were the beneficiaries of the film's featured sexual act, which Linda had been taught by her husband and keeper, Chuck Traynor.

Now, Lovelace has told us the humilating and painful truth about "Deep Throat" in Ordeal, her autobiography.

At the height of the movie's popularity, for instance, Nora Ephron wrote an essay about going to see "Deep Throat." She also used her license as a writer to get a telephone interview with Linda Lovelace. "I totally enjoyed myself making the movie," she is told. "I don't have any inhibitions about sex. I just hope that everybody who goes to see the film loses some of their inhibitions."

What Ephron did not know was that Linda would later list these and other answers as having been dictatd by Traynor for just such journalistic occasions; that he punished her for betraying any unacceptable emotion (when, for instance, one of five men to whom she was delivered in a motel room for an orgy refused to pay because she cried); in fact, that she had been beaten so severely and regularly that she suffered permanent injury to the blood vessels in her legs.

What Nora did not know was that Linda would also write of her three escape attempts, and her three forcible returns to this life of sexual servitude; first by the betrayal of another prostitute; then by her own mother who had been charmed into telling Chuck Traynor Linda's whereabouts by his prostestations of being both sorry and relatively innocent; and finally by Linda's fear for the lives of two friends who had sheltered her after hearing that she had been made to do a sex film, and outside whose home Traynor had parked a van that contained, Linda believed, his collection of hand grenades and a machine gun.

Even now, all of these and other facts about Traynor must be read with the word "alleged" in front of them; for they come from Linda's account of more than two years of fear, sadism, and forced prostitution. Traynor has been quoted as calling these charges "so ridiculous that I can't take them seriously." He has also been quoted as saying that "when I first dated her she was so shy, it shocked her to have been seen nude by a man...I created Linda Lovelace."

Lovelace's account of being "created" includes guns being put to her head, having sex while being watched through a peephole to make sure she couldn't escape, being tortured with a garden hose if she refused to offer such amusements as exposing herself in restaurants and to passing drivers on the highway.

Ordeal is a very difficult book to read--and must have been more difficult to write. But Lovelace says she wanted to purge forever the idea that she had become "Linda Lovelace" voluntarily.

From Ms. magazine.

WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED READING THE STORY, PLEASE TURN THE PAGE. DO NOT TURN BACK TO THIS PAGE AGAIN.

Appendix C

Questionnaire

Please indicate your gender: ______ Male __________ Female

Please indicate your ethnic background:

______ Black _______ White _______ Hispanic _________ Other

If other, please specify: ______________________

Please indicate the department on campus (not the college) from which you expect to receive your degree:

____

PLEASE DO NOT TALK UNTIL EVERYONE HAS FINISHED.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION. OTHER CLASSES ALSO WILL BE RECEIVING THIS OR SIMILAR MATERIAL, SO PLEASE DO NOT DISCUSS THIS STUDY WITH YOUR FRIENDS TO AVOID WEAKENING OR BIASING THE STUDY.

23. Books that contain certain four-letter words should be banned for sale to adults.

_______ SA _______ A _______ N _______ D _______SD

24. Books that contain certain four-letter words should be banned for sale to adolescents.

_______ SA _______ A _______ N _______ D _______SD

25. Books presenting a favorable image of U.S. Communists should be banned for sale to adults.

_______ SA _______ A _______ N _______ D _______SD

26. Books presenting a favorable image of U.S. Communists should be banned for sale to adolescents.

_______ SA _______ A _______ N _______ D _______SD

27. Magazines that show adults having sexual relations should be banned for sale to adults.

_______ SA _______ A _______ N _______ D _______SD

28. Magazines that show adults having sexual relations should be banned for sale to adolescents.

_______ SA _______ A _______ N _______ D _______SD

29. Magazines that show sexual acts involving children should be banned for sale to adults.

_______ SA _______ A _______ N _______ D _______SD

30. Magazines that show sexual acts involving children should be banned for sale to adolescents.

_______ SA _______ A _______ N _______ D _______SD

When you have finished the answers on this page, please turn to the next page.

15. Motion pictures that depict Christ as sexually active should be banned for viewing by adults.

_______ SA _______ A _______ N _______ D _______ SD

16. Motion pictures that depict Christ as sexually active should be banned for viewing by adolescents.

_______ SA _______ A _______ N _______ D _______ SD

17. Magazines that show nudity should be banned for sale to adults.

_______ SA _______ A _______ N _______ D _______ SD

18. Magazines that show nudity should be banned for sale to adolescents.

_______ SA _______ A _______ N _______ D _______ SD

19. Books that glorify illegal drugs should be banned for sale to adults.

_______ SA _______ A _______ N _______ D _______ SD

20. Books that glorify illegal drugs should be banned for sale to adolescents.

_______ SA _______ A _______ N _______ D _______ SD

21. Books that describe women as inferior to men should be banned for sale to adults.

_______ SA _______ A _______ N _______ D _______ SD

22. Books that describe women as inferior to men should be banned for sale to adolescents.

_______ SA _______ A _______ N _______ D _______ SD

When you have finished the answers on this page, please turn to the next page.

7. X-rated movies should be banned for viewing by adults.

_______ SA _______ A _______ N _______ D _______SD

8. X-rated movies should be banned for viewing by adolescents.

_______ SA _______ A _______ N _______ D _______SD

9. Books that contain racist language should be banned for sale to adults.

_______ SA _______ A _______ N _______ D _______SD

10. Books that contain racist language should be banned for sale to adolescents.

_______ SA _______ A _______ N _______ D _______SD

11. Movies that contain graphic violence should be banned for viewing by adults.

_______ SA _______ A _______ N _______ D _______SD

12. Movies that contain graphic violence should be banned for viewing by adolescents.

_______ SA _______ A _______ N _______ D _______SD

13. Books that advocate racial violence should be banned for sale to adults.

_______ SA _______ A _______ N _______ D _______SD

14. Books that advocate racial violence should be banned for sale to adolescents.

_______ SA _______ A _______ N _______ D _______SD

When you have finished the answers on this page, please turn to the next page.

PLEASE RESPOND TO THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS. IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT YOU RESPOND TO ALL THE STATEMENTS. IT ALSO IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU PAY NO ATTENTION TO ANSWERS YOUR CLASSMATES MAY PROVIDE. PLEASE RESPOND TO EACH STATEMENT IN THE ORDER THAT YOU SEE IT LISTED, AND ONCE YOU HAVE RESPONDED DO NOT LATER RECONSIDER AND CHANGE YOUR ANSWER.

For the following statements check the space to the left of the response option that most closely corresponds to your opinion about each statement. SA means strongly agree, A means agree, N means neutral, D means disagree, and SD means strongly disagree. Please notice that some of the statements concern the banning of certain controversial materials for sale to or use by adults, and others concern the sale to or use by adolescents of such materials.

1. Books that use words to describe explicit sexual acts should be banned for sale to adults.

_______ SA _______ A _______ N _______ D _______ SD

2. Books that use words to describe explicit sexual acts should be banned for sale to adolescents.

_______ SA _______ A _______ N _______ D _______ SD

3. Motion pictures that depict sexual violence should be banned for viewing by adults.

_______ SA _______ A _______ N _______ D _______ SD

4. Motion pictures that depict sexual violence should be banned for viewing by adolescents.

_______ SA _______ A _______ N _______ D _______ SD

5. Books that advocate devil worship should be banned for sale to adults.

_______ SA _______ A _______ N _______ D _______ SD

6. Books that advocate devil worship should be banned for sale to adolescents.

_______ SA _______ A _______ N _______ D _______ SD

When you have finished the answers on this page, please turn to the next page.

Gender-Based Differences in Attitudes Towards Stories: An Examination of Maryland Editors

by

Donna M. Bertazzoni
Communication Arts Program
Hood College
Frederick, MD 21701-9988

Presented to the Commission on the Status of Women of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Boston, MA, August 1991

"Are women in journalism making a difference?" As more women graduate from journalism school, move into print and broadcast newsrooms, and advance -- albeit slowly -- into middle and upper management, are they having an impact? Has the agenda changed? Has the focus of the news changed? In recent years, a number of articles in professional journals, speeches and panel discussions have focused on those questions. They've provided a great deal of anecdotal evidence that answers the questions in the affirmative.

Joan Konner, dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University, addressed the New Jersey Press Women's Association about the subject in May 1990. Her speech, excerpts of which appeared in the October 1990 issue of ASNE Bulletin, summed up many of the points made in similar articles. In it, she said,

> Are women in journalism, especially now that there are more of us, some of us in positions of leadership, making a difference? Given the impact of the media in shaping our social, political and economic life, are we seeing changes not only in numbers in the newsrooms, but in the agenda and priorities of society? (22)

She cited Geneva Overholser, editor of The Des Moines Register, as an example of a woman making a difference. Under Overholser's direction, The Register published a five-part series detailing a woman's experience with rape. (22)

She also discussed the Fall 1989 meeting of Columbia's alumni. The topic of the meeting was "Is News Getting Too Soft?" Konner pointed out that both the subject and the title were chosen by a man.

> 'Hard' and 'soft' are terms only a man would have invented. It goes along with the sports metaphor of most news. Who's winning? Who's losing? In politics, business, culture. Who's up? Who's down? If you're winning, you're 'hard' news. If you're losing, you're a 'soft' feature for the inside pages. (24)

Konner said the meeting revealed a concern about the changes that the "different perspectives" of women and minorities were bringing to the newsroom. (24)

Many people both inside and outside the newspaper industry would argue that those changes are a plus, not a cause for concern. The types of articles that Konner and others call "new" news focus on such topics as the environment, consumer issues, care of the elderly, analyses of social trends. "...(T)he distinction between soft news and hard news is blurring. Is this happening because there are more women in the newsrooms? Probably, but who knows? Clearly a shift of values and priorities is taking place." (24)

If this shift in values actually does exist, how quickly can women journalists make this difference? How much influence do women have? How often are their stories given Page One play? And do women editors actually view stories differently from men? Answers to some of those questions are available.

A National Federation of Press Women's survey showed that women held only 16.2 percent of the directing editorships on U.S. daily newspapers in 1989. This was a gain of 1.2 percent over 1988. Directing editor positions included editor-in-chief, executive editor, editor, associate or assistant executive editor, managing editor, associate or assistant managing editor, editorial page editor and news editor. (Wolfe, 48) Predictions have been made that at the current rate of increase, it will take well into the 21st century before newspaper women achieve management parity with men. (Russman, 10)

The situation isn't much better when you look beyond just newspapers. In her study "Taking Stock: Women in the Media Before the 21st Century," Jean Gaddy Wilson of the University of Missouri found that only 6 percent of the top-level and 25 percent of the middle-management jobs in the media are held by women, even though women account for 57 percent of the entry-level reporting and sales jobs. Women also held 94 percent of the clerical and support jobs. Wilson surveyed about 4,000 newspapers and radio and television stations. (Garneau, Study, 70).

In addition, a study commissioned by the American Society of Newspaper Editors revealed that stories by male reporters, and stories and pictures about men still dominate American newspaper front pages. The one-month study, conducted in February 1990, "counted how often women were portrayed on the front pages of 20 big and small newspapers -- in pictures, as sources of news stories and in bylines. It found females write and make news a fraction of the time, but the fraction is growing." (Garneau, ASNE, 13) In responding to the survey's findings, Janet Chusmir, then executive editor of The Miami Herald, wrote

> We aren't happy with the representation of women in our news pages, bylines or supervisory positions. Frankly no newspaper in the country should be.... As long as men -- white men -- hold most of the keys to power throughout our society, it will be their pictures we see most

> often on Page One, their comments we read most often in stories, their voices we hear most often from the editorial pages. (Garneau, 13)

Other editors made similar points, although perhaps not as tactfully. Max Frankel, executive editor of The New York Times, said "...As soon as Mr. Gorbachev lets Mrs. Gorbachev do his deciding, or even speaking, we will be quoting or photographing more women on page one." (Sansom, 7)

Will it take a change in society or a change in the newsroom before women and issues that supposedly interest women are given more and better play in our nation's newspapers? Do women really have different views than men about what is news and what is important? Or have we all been indoctrinated into the same mold by our journalism professors and our journalism textbooks? In an article in the January 1986 ASNE Bulletin about working for women editors, Stan Strick, managing editor of The Everett (Wash.) Herald, said "If anything, the male and female newsroom managers I knew shared a common aggressiveness toward the news and a skepticism, if not outright irreverence, for things held culturally sacred." Strick, who works for a female executive editor, said "the women journalists I know seem to share in the professional subculture of all journalists." He did not "sense that some hidden social agenda was behind anything they did, nor did any of them wear feminist beliefs on their sleeves."

On the other hand, Kay Mills, in her book A Place In The News, cited several examples in her chapters, "Diapers on the Front Page," and "The Newsroom Evolution," of issues that came to the forefront or were more closely covered because of women reporters and editors. They included child abuse, rape, medical care for pregnant poor women, and toxic shock syndrome. Soma Golden, the national editor of The New York Times, regularly attends the Times' daily news budget meeting.

> 'I've never really felt as if I'm the woman at the 5 p.m. meeting,' insists Golden. 'I certainly don't represent all women ... But I am female. I do have some strong feelings' that may differ from those of the men in the room, she adds. (Mills, 254)

Jean Gaddy Wilson, in a speech given to the University of California at Berkeley, also believes women can influence the focus of the news.

> There is some debate as to whether women and minorities look at and cover events and issues differently. The newspaper industry is going to great lengths to try to increase the number of minorities in newsrooms because there's the feeling that a whole slice of life is left out of the coverage if minorities aren't present. The same is true of females. (Professional, 11)

Is there a way to get beyond these feelings and the anecdotes that women editors make a difference? Is there a way to quantify whether women do look at stories differently from men? In an attempt to begin to answer that question, women and men editors employed by daily newspapers in the state of Maryland were surveyed. The survey asked the editors to rank 12 stories that could comprise a daily news budget. They were then asked which six stories their newspapers were likely to put on page one and which story was likely to be chosen as the lead. (Appendix A)

METHODOLOGY

Some 15 daily newspapers are published in the state of Maryland, although two afternoon papers, The (Frederick) News and The (Hagerstown) Daily Mail are essentially updates of morning editions. Editors at those papers were surveyed, however.

Maryland was chosen as a test state because the demographics of the state ranges from the rural Eastern Shore and Allegheny Mountain areas to urban and suburban counties on the outskirts of Washington, D.C. As a result of the differences in populations, the newspapers range in size from the 7,100 circulation of The Daily Banner in Cambridge to the combined 373,150 circulation of The Sun and The Evening Sun in Baltimore. The number of editors on the papers ranged from a low of three on The Daily Banner and The Cecil Whig to the 45 or so on The Sun and The Evening Sun.

The names of editors who held titles that generally would be considered supervisory positions were taken from the 1990 Editor and Publisher Yearbook. Included were such positions as executive editor, associate editor, managing editor, assistant managing editor, editorial page editor, city/state/regional/metro editor, assistant city/state/regional/metro editor, sports editor, business editor, lifestyle/women/family editor, and photo editor. The top editor of each paper was then sent a list and asked to verify it, as well as to add the names of any editors who weren't on the list but who held supervisory positions. Editors of all papers except The Sun responded with verified lists.

Based on the lists, 141 editors were sent surveys. Of those, 32, or 22.6 percent, were clearly women, and 107, or 75.8 percent were clearly men. It was unclear from the name of the other three editors whether the person was male or female. Some 71 editors returned the surveys, for a total response rate of 50.3 percent. Seventeen responses were from women, although story rankings from only 16 were usable. Excluding the three editors whose gender wasn't clear, that represented a response rate from women of 53 percent. The remaining 54 responses were from men, although only 52 story rankings were usable. That represented a response rate of 50 percent. The total response rate in the survey closely matched the makeup of the sample. Some 23.9 percent of the respondents were women, and the remaining 76 percent were men.

At least one survey was returned from every newspaper. The response rates from the individual papers ranged from a low of 12 percent to a high of 87 percent. Only one response each was received from two Eastern Shore newspapers; however, the persons who responded were the top editors. (Appendix B)

THE SURVEY

The survey first asked the editors to rank 12 stories in order of importance. The stories were not "real" stories, but were composites. They included a mix of current events, i.e., the effects on local residents of the buildup in the Persian Gulf and soaring gasoline prices; issues that would likely interest men, i.e., sports; issues that would likely interest women, i.e., abortion and education; and stories that could be considered of interest to all sexes, i.e. reduction in hours at state parks and federal post offices. The stories were identified as being wire or local.

Besides ranking stories, the editors were asked to provide such demographic information as title, whether they attended the daily budget meeting, the highest academic degree they had received, and whether they had received any journalism training. The purpose was to get a sense for whether factors that had nothing to do with gender influenced how the editors ranked the stories. It is possible that the general atmosphere of the newsroom, the common precepts learned in journalism school, and the indoctrination of the daily budget meeting influenced their decisions. The editors who responded to the survey were a rather homogeneous group.

Altogether, 29.6 percent of the respondents were on the executive, managing or assistant managing editors level. That included 34 percent of the male respondents and 17.6 percent of the female respondents. It is worth noting that three newspapers in Maryland have female editors or managing editors, and all three women responded. Some 22.5 percent of the respondents were city/state or region editors or assistant editors. That included 22.6 percent of the male respondents, and 23.5 percent of the females. Altogether, then, 56.6 percent of the editors were in news-directing positions, 52.9 percent of the men and 41.2 percent of the women.

The next highest number of total respondents identified themselves as sports editors or assistant editors. That included

15.5 percent of the total. The rest, in order of ranking, worked in editorial, lifestyle, photography, business and on the wire desk.

Among the women, the next highest number of respondents identified themselves as lifestyle/family editors. That included 17.6 percent of the total. The rest, in order of ranking, worked in sports, wire, business, photography or editorial. Among the men, the next highest number of respondents identified themselves as sports editors or assistant editors. That included 15.1 percent of the total. The rest, in order of ranking, worked in editorial, business, photography or lifestyle.

Some 95.8 percent of the responding editors had at least some college. Of those, 67.6 percent held bachelor's degrees, 11.3 percent held master's degrees and one person held a juris doctor. In all, 78.9 percent said they had received some form of journalism training, either in undergraduate or graduate school, or by attending seminars sponsored by The American Press Institute and the Southern Newspaper Publishers Association. Fifteen of the 17 female respondents, or 88.2 percent, held either bachelor's or master's degrees. Fifteen of the women also said they had received specific journalism training. Forty-one of the 53 male respondents, or 77.3 percent, held either bachelor's, master's or juris doctor degrees. In addition, 41 of the men said they had received specific journalism training. In other words, 56 of the 71 respondents had, in some fashion, been exposed to the traditional criteria of news: timeliness, proximity, unusualness, conflict, audience, prominence and impact. (Brooks, 4)

Another factor that might have influenced the rankings was whether the respondent attended the daily news budget meeting. Some 81.7 percent of the respondents said they attended it at least sometimes, 76.4 percent of the women and 83.3 percent of the men. If one were to draw a composite of the typical respondent, therefore, the person would have attended at least some college, would probably have received some journalism training either in school or through a seminar, and would attend the daily news budget meeting at least sometimes. In other words, the respondent would have been exposed to the traditional criteria on which journalists tend to base news decisions.

SURVEY RESULTS

Despite the similarity among the editors, there were some differences in the way they ranked stories when the rankings were compared by gender. With such a small sample, it was impossible to determine actual "significance" from the results, but an attempt was made to show trends in choices between the men and women editors. First, the total story rankings were compiled, then the results from men and women were separated out. (Appendix C) The results from each gender were compared to the total rankings, and to each other. In addition, the most significant quarter of the rankings was also compared. The discussion of each story also will indicate the frequency with which the story was listed for page one by the editors, and how often it was chosen as the lead. (Appendix D)

Many of the stories offered were pairs, either male/female, conservative/liberal or state/federal. In evaluating the results, those stories will be discussed together.

Story A -- Local first grade teacher, Mark Smith, receives National Teaching Award in Washington, D.C. from President Bush. (Local)

When considering the traditional news criteria, this story features elements of proximity, audience and impact. Results showed that while this story appealed to both male and female editors, the female respondents tended to rank it slightly higher.

This story was ranked as the top story by 18.8 percent of the total respondents, 25 percent of the women, and 17 percent of the men. It was ranked among the top three by 49.3 percent of the editors. However, 62.5 percent of the women ranked it among the top three, while only 45.3 percent of the men did. The percentages held true when asked to decide which stories to put on page one. Altogether, 79.7 percent of the respondents put the story on A1, 87.5 percent of the women, and 77.3 percent of the men.

This story may have been ranked higher by women because of the subject. Education is one of the topics that is cited when listing subjects that are considered to be of particular interest to women. In addition, education is a beat that traditionally many women have covered.

Story B -- Economists predict price of gasoline may hit $2 a gallon by the end of the year. (Wire)

This was a pocketbook issue story that appealed to everyone.

It was ranked number one by 36.2 percent of the respondents, the highest percentage received by any story. Some 43.8 percent of the women ranked it first, with 68.8 percent putting it among their top three. Of the men, 43 percent ranked it first, with 52.8 percent putting it among the top three.

Story B's overall rankings were high, but fewer editors indicated that it would appear on page one of their newspaper than the teacher story. This was a wire story, and at least one newspaper in Maryland, The Carroll County Times, adheres to a policy of preferring to put only local stories on page one. Altogether, 72.4 percent of the editors would put the story on A1, 75 percent of the women, and 71.6 percent of the men.

Story C -- Local Army Reservist John Doe sent to Saudi Arabia the day before his wedding is scheduled. (Local)

Story H -- Local woman, one of the staff nurses at Walter Reed Army Hospital, is sent to Saudi Arabia. She leaves behind her husband and two children younger than five. (Local)

At the time that this survey was written, the news was filled with a plethora of stories about women being mobilized for service in the Persian Gulf, and many of the stories were accompanied by heartfelt photographs of young children saying goodby to mommy. To balance the natural tendency to choose a story that could be considered both unusual and timely, the survey included a similar story about a man called away the day before he was to be married. Many of the editors noted on the survey that these stories were related, and either gave them the same rank or indicated that their ranks were interchangeable.

Interestingly, despite the "human element" of these stories, which is supposed to appeal more to women, men tended to rank these stories slightly higher. Nonetheless, they appeared on just about every editor's list of A1 stories. Some 86.9 percent of the total respondents put Story C, about the male reservist, on page one, while 100 percent put Story H, about the staff nurse, on page one. Some 93.7 percent of the women and 84.9 percent of the men would put Story C on A1.

Among all respondents, 13 percent ranked story C as number one. That included 17 percent of the men, but none of the women. Story H was ranked number one by 15.9 percent of the respondents, 6.3 percent of the women, and 18.9 percent of the men. A slightly more noticeable difference is evident when comparing the top three rankings for the stories. Among women, 37.5 percent ranked Story C as one of their top three, while 61.5 percent of the men put it among their top three. For Story H, 43.8 percent of the women, and 52.8 percent of the men ranked it as one of their top three. Altogether, 55.9 percent of the editors ranked Story C among the top three, and 50.7 percent ranked Story H among the top three.

It is possible that the "unusual" element of a man's wedding plans being affected by the war was enough to convince more men to rank the story higher than the story about the nurse. It's also possible that men and women were able to relate better to the story that focused on a member of their sex as the principal character.

Story D -- Sen. Barbara Mikulski addresses pro-choice rally

of 150,000 in Washington, D.C. (Wire)

Story L -- Local Right-to-Life group endorses State Sen. Michelle Days, who is seeking re-election from your paper's senatorial district. (Local)

These two stories were designed to provide the pro- and anti-sides of the abortion issue, yet there was more to it than that. Story L, the right-to-life group story, was closely related to the political situation in the state. The survey was mailed shortly before the general election in Maryland. In the 1990 session of the General Assembly, a group of anti-abortion senators filibustered an attempt to codify the Roe v. Wade standards as Maryland state law. Several of the senators involved in the filibuster were defeated in November, and Maryland did pass one of the most liberal abortion laws in the country during the 1991 session of the General Assembly.

The Mikulski story, Story D, was not a particularly popular story among any of the editors, and it was even less popular among women. Some 47.8 percent of the editors ranked it as one of their bottom three. It received no number one rankings, and only 5.8 percent (or four) of the editors, put it among the top three. Three of those four editors were men. Among men, 41.5 percent ranked it among the bottom quarter, while 68.7 percent of the women did. More men listed the story for page one, 20.7 percent to 12.5 percent of the women. However altogether only 18.8 percent of the editors listed Story D for A1.

Story L ranked somewhat better among all editors, and especially among women, although the rankings were still concentrated in the bottom half of the scale. Some 26 percent of all editors would have put it on page one, 37.5 percent of the women and 22 percent of the men. Overall, this story was ranked among the bottom three by 44.9 percent of the editors. More men ranked this among their bottom three, 49 percent, than ranked the Mikulski story that way. On the other hand, only 31.2 percent of the women ranked it among the bottom three. More of them ranked it in the third quarter, 43.7 percent. This story was ranked number one by one woman, but none of the male editors ranked it higher than third.

The difference in rankings between two somewhat similar stories is interesting. The male editors tended to favor the story that had a more prominent name attached to it, Sen. Mikulski, and had a more stereotypical focus. The women editors tended to favor the story that was more closely related to their actual choice to have an abortion. The underlying theme of Story L was the work Sen. Days could do in the state senate, if she was re-elected, to prevent the passage of a bill that would preserve a woman's right to choose an abortion.

Story E -- Local state park may have to reduce hours because of state budget cuts. (Local)

Story K -- U.S. Postal Service threatens to once again cut back hours because of continuing budget crisis. (Wire)

These two stories featured the traditional elements of audience, impact and proximity. Many people remembered the inconveniences faced when the post office cut its hours during the last budget crisis. In addition, rumors were beginning to circulate that Maryland was going to have to take some drastic steps to curb its budget deficit.

Story E, the park story, was a solid story, although not a top story. Some 39.7 percent of the editors ranked it in their second quarter, 43.8 percent of the women and 38.4 percent of the men. Both men and women expected the story to appear on page one. Overall, 62.3 percent of the editors put it on their page one lists, 43.7 percent of the women and 67.9 percent of the men.

Men, on the other hand, were much more interested in the post office story, Story K, than women. While the overall rankings were lower for this story, a significant number of male editors still put it on their page one lists. Only 18.7 percent of the women would have expected the post office story to be on page one, while 43.5 percent of the men would. Overall, 37.6 percent listed it for page one. Among women, 56.2 percent ranked the story among the bottom three, while only 25 percent of the men ranked it that low. Some 32.6 percent of the men ranked it among the third quarter.

Interestingly enough, the state park story turned out to be "real." Because of budget problems, Maryland did close some of its state parks for the winter, and planned to delay reopening them until after the start of the 1992 fiscal year. On the other hand, the postal service was able to increase the cost of stamps and didn't follow through on its threat to cut services.

Even though these stories were paired when the survey was developed, editors apparently did not see them as related. It is possible that the post office story served as a counter story to the education story, Story A, rather than to the park story. As women have traditionally been more interested in education, men have traditionally been more interested in government, economics and budgets. Women rated Story A higher; men rated Story K higher.

Story F -- Conservative family groups urge President Bush to veto bill containing tax breaks for parents who send their children to day care centers. (Wire)

Story I -- Liberals rally outside adult book store under fire from conservative groups in community. (Local)

This was another pair of stories that was not perceived as a pair by the editors. The stories were supposed to represent the liberal and conservative sides of the traditional "family values" argument. Story I received much better rankings than Story F from both men and women, although women tended to heavily favor Story I.

Overall, Story F, the tax break story, was ranked among the bottom quarter by 47.7 percent of all editors, 47 percent of the men and 50 percent of the women. None of the women listed the story for page one, while just 9.4 percent of the men did.

On the other hand, Story I, about the rally, was a solid second quarter story among all editors, with 35 percent ranking it fourth, fifth or sixth, but that was because of the higher rankings women gave this story. Among women, 50 percent ranked it in the second quarter, and another 31 percent ranked it among the top three. Some 35 percent of the men ranked it among the second quarter, and another 28 percent ranked it in the third quarter. Overall, 81 percent of the women, but only 55.9 percent of the men ranked the story in the top half. Women were also much more likely to put this story on the A1 lists, 87.5 percent of the women to 50.9 percent of the men. Overall, 59.4 percent of the editors had Story I on their page one lists.

There is no obvious reason why women would prefer this story. It does have "family value" elements, but there's no way of knowing whether the women rated the story higher than the men because it reflected their views, or because they saw it as an example of moral deterioration. Two women did choose this story as their lead story for Page One. When explaining why, one of them cited the free speech issue and the other cited the unusualness of a liberal group picketing in a conservative area.

The other possible reason why women rated the story higher than men was the overall choices of the stories. Perhaps, when faced with ranking 12 stories, this issue was simply of more interest to women than, for example, the threat to cut post office hours or the two sports stories.

Story G -- Local resident joins the National Basketball Association's Detroit Pistons. (Local)

Story J -- Local resident joins Ladies Professional Golf Association tour. (Local)

For Story G, the NBA story, 50 percent of the women, but only 30 percent of the men had it on their page one lists. In all, 34.7 percent of the editors had it on their page one lists. The highest ranking that Story G received from women was number two. Some 43.8 percent of the women ranked it in the top half, and an additional 37.6 percent ranked it in the third quarter. In all, 81.4 percent ranked it among their top nine stories. The highest ranking the story received from male editors was also number two. However, the male editors were much more ambivalent about ranking the story. Some 47 percent ranked Story G in the top half -- similar to the percent among women -- but only another 15 percent ranked it in the third quarter. Among men, 35.8 percent ranked it in the bottom quarter. Overall, 32.9 percent of the respondents ranked it in the bottom quarter, but that was mostly men.

On the other hand Story J, the LPGA story, received much better rankings from male editors than from female editors. None of the women ranked the story higher than sixth, and none of the women had the story on their page one lists. Among men, the highest ranking was third, and 22.6 percent had it on their page one lists. Overall, 29.4 percent of the men ranked Story J in the top half. Some 31 percent of the men ranked the story in the third quarter, and 39.2 percent ranked it in the fourth quarter. Among women, 50 percent ranked it in the third quarter, and 31.4 percent ranked it in the fourth quarter. Overall, 35.8 percent ranked it in the third quarter, and 36.3 percent ranked it in the fourth quarter.

These two stories were an interesting juxtaposition. The male editors ranked Story J about the female golfer much higher than the female editors did, while the female editors gave more credence to

Story G about the male basketball player. Perhaps the men were being too careful in checking their biases and giving more equal play to both sports stories, while the women editors were more attuned to giving good play to an occasional sports story about men, but rarely to a story about women. The differences in rankings could be a reflection of the overall poor coverage that women sports receives, or it could be an indication of a greater interest in sports among men.

Lead stories

Editors were also asked which story they would expect to be the lead story and why. The overwhelming choice among both male and female editors was Story B, the prediction that gas prices would rise to $2 by the end of the year. Most editors cited the pocketbook nature of the story and its impact on readers as reasons why it would be the lead. Among the women, 50 percent chose story B as the lead, while another 25 percent chose Story A, the teacher story. Among men, 37.7 percent chose Story B as the lead, while 22.6 percent chose story A.

Only three other stories were chosen for the lead by women. Story I, the bookstore story, was chosen by 12.5 percent of the women, and one editor suggested packaging Stories E and K, the park and post office stories.

There was more diversity among the male editors, perhaps because there were more of them answering the question. Besides Stories A and B, stories receiving votes were Stories C and H, the two Saudi Arabia stories; Story I, the bookstore story; Story E, the park story; and Story K, the post office story. Four of the men suggested running a Saudi Arabia package as the lead.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the survey showed that despite their similar positions, educational background, training and attendance at the daily budget meeting, male and female editors did rank certain stories differently. Even those stories in which the differences in rankings were not very great showed the potential for gender-based differences.

Women gave higher rankings to the stories about the teacher (an education story), the state senator whose vote could influence the state's abortion laws (an abortion story), and the adult book store (a possible family issue). Men gave higher rankings to the stories about the female golfer (a sports story), the threat to cut hours at the post office (a government story), and the abortion rally. Both groups of editors gave high ratings to the gasoline price rise story and the Saudi Arabia mobilization stories. Male editors tended to rank the Saudi Arabia stories slightly higher and females tended to rank the gasoline story slightly higher. The mobilization stories involved conflict, which tends to interest men more, and the gasoline story was a consumer issue, which tends to be of more interest to women, but the overall differences were not very large. Men and women editors were both interested in the park story, and ranked it among the second quarter. Neither group of editors was interested in the conservative view of child care.

The results of the survey indicate that there appears to be a difference in the agendas and news judgments of male and female newspaper editors along the lines of the anecdotal evidence provided by many authors and lecturers. The next step is to try to quantify on a larger scale whether those differences really do exist, and how significant the differences actually are.

Some areas to consider include whether the rankings would change significantly if the stories being offered for inclusion were different. If fewer pairs of stories were offered, or if only one sports story was included, instead of two, would the differences between the men and women be as noticeable? Another area to consider would be to direct the survey simply at editors involved in making decisions about the daily news pages, instead of across the spectrum of newspaper sections, or to survey all editors who attend the daily budget meeting, no matter what position they hold.

The results from the Maryland sample have indicated that a difference between male and female editors can be discerned, but it will take more research, on a larger scale, to determine how significant those differences actually are.

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APPENDIX A

Please complete the following survey and return it in the enclosed envelope by Nov. 5, 1990.

1. How many years have you been in the newspaper industry? ______

2. What was your first position? ______

3. How many years have you been employed by this paper? ______

4. What is your title? ______

5. How many years have you been in this position? ______

6. What are your duties? ______

______

7. Do you have any reporters or editors working under you?

Yes ______ No ______

8. If yes, how many reporters and editors do you supervise?

Number of men ______ Number of women ______

9. Do you aim your paper primarily at a rural audience, a suburban audience or an urban audience? Check all that apply.

Rural ______ Suburban ______ Urban ______

10. Because of recent incidents involving the New England Patriots and the Cincinnati Bengals, the issue of women sports reporters entering the locker room of male professional athletes is making news. Are there any stories you would prefer not to assign a female reporter to cover?

Yes ______ No ______

11. If yes, what type of stories would they be?

______

12. Are there any stories you would prefer not to assign a male reporter to cover?

Yes ______ No ______

13. If yes, what type of stories would they be?

______

Please turn to next page.

14. Given the choice, would you prefer to assign a male or a female reporter to the following stories? Please check M for male or F for female or N for no preference.

A. Eight-year-old boy caught in crossfire becomes latest victim in city's drug war.
M _____ F _____ N _____

B. Mayor vetoes property tax increase despite deepening city budget crisis.
M _____ F _____ N _____

C. Right-to-life organizations re-evaluate strategy after pro-life candidates lose in primary.
M _____ F _____ N _____

D. New rape crisis center opens in your community the same day police report a surge in domestic violence calls.
M _____ F _____ N _____

E. Gold medalist Mary Lou Retton to demonstrate techniques for Olympic hopefuls in your community.
M _____ F _____ N _____

F. Pro-choice group rallies in front of City Hall to support family planning clinic that performs abortions.
M _____ F _____ N _____

G. SWAT team responds when escaped prisoner takes hostages at local grocery store.
M _____ F _____ N _____

H. Local Babe Ruth baseball team qualifies for regional semifinal tournament.
M _____ F _____ N _____

I. Higher gas prices straining county school system's transportation budget.
M _____ F _____ N _____

J. Local manufacturing company wins contract from Defense Department to manufacture new weapons system.
M _____ F _____ N _____

15. Do you attend the daily news budget meeting? Please check.

Yes _____ No _____ Sometimes _____

In questions 16 through 18, please refer to the 12 stories on the next page. The word local in parentheses after the story indicates it was written by a reporter from your newspaper; wire indicates the story came from a wire service.

Please turn to next page.

16. The following 12 stories are offered at the daily news budget meeting. Using the letters of the stories, please rank the stories in the order in which you feel they are important, with 1 being the most important and 12 being the least important.

A) Local first grade teacher, Mark Smith, receives National Teaching Award in Washington D.C. from President Bush. (Local)

B) Economists predict price of gasoline may hit $2 a gallon by the end of the year. (Wire)

C) Local Army Reservist John Doe sent to Saudi Arabia the day before his wedding was scheduled. (Local)

D) Sen. Barbara Mikulski addresses pro-choice rally of 150,000 in Washington, D.C. (Wire)

E) Local state park may have to reduce hours because of state budget cuts. (Local)

F) Conservative family groups urge President Bush to veto bill containing tax breaks for parents who send their children to day-care centers. (Wire)

G) Local resident joins the National Basketball Association's Detroit Pistons. (Local)

H) Local woman, one of the staff nurses at Walter Reed Army Hospital, is sent to Saudi Arabia. She leaves behind her husband, and two children younger than 5. (Local)

I) Liberals rally outside adult book store under fire from conservative groups in community. (Local)

J) Local resident joins Ladies Professional Golf Association tour. (Local)

K) U.S. Postal Service threatens to once again cut back hours because of continuing budget crisis. (Wire)

L) Local Right-to-Life group endorses State Sen. Michelle Days, who is seeking re-election from your paper's senatorial district. (Local)

1) ______

2) ______

3) ______

4) ______

5) ______

6) ______

7) ______

8) ______

9) ______

10) ______

11) ______

12) ______

Please turn to next page.

17. Please list the six stories you would expect to be chosen at the news budget meeting to run on the front page of your newspaper. Please use letters.

1. ______ 3. _______ 5. ______

2. ______ 4. _______ 6. ______

18. Which story would you expect to be the lead story? __________

19. Why? ____

20. Are there any stories that you personally would have put on page one that aren't among those you listed for question 17?

Yes ______ No ______

21. If yes, which ones? List up to six stories.

1. ______ 3. ______ 5. ______

2. ______ 4. ______ 6. ______

22. Why would you have chosen different stories? _______________

____

23. Which story would you personally have chosen as the lead? ___

24. Why? ____

An article in the August 18, 1990 edition of Editor and Publisher discussed the National Association of Black Journalists' frustrations about the number of blacks in supervisory positions in all media and the journalists' "inability to prevent distorted depictions of themselves in all media."

25. Does your newspaper have any black journalists in supervisory positions?

Yes _____ No _____

26. If yes, how many are men? ______ How many are women? ______

27. Does your paper have a policy regarding sensitively depicting blacks and other ethnic minorities?

Yes ______ No ______

28. If yes, what is your policy? ______________________________

____

Please turn to final page.

29. Does your paper have a policy that encourages actively seeking non-traditional sources for stories, such as male day care workers or female business owners?

Yes ______ No ______

A study in the Spring 1989 Newspaper Research Journal examined North Carolina newspaper readers' attitudes toward courtesy titles. The article, "Mr., Ms. & Miss in the Land of Sir and Ma'am," showed that 40.7 percent of the readers preferred courtesy titles, 11.6 percent preferred last names only, and 48.7 percent were neutral.

30. Does your paper use courtesy titles for men?

Yes ______ No ______

31. Does you paper use courtesy titles for women?

Yes ______ No ______

32. Does your paper have a policy about using male, female or neutral identifications in official titles, such as chairman, chairwoman or chairperson?

Yes ______ No ______

33. If yes, what is your policy? ______________________________

____

Finally, we'd like to ask some demographic questions.

34. What is your gender? Please check. Male _____ Female _____

35. What is the highest academic degree you've received?

____

36. Have you had any specific journalism training, such as a major or minor in journalism, or have you attended special seminars such as at the American Press Institute?

Yes ______ No ______

37. If yes, please explain ______________________________

38. What is your yearly salary range? Please circle.

$10,000-$14,999
$15,000-$19,999
$20,000-$24,999
$25,000-$29,999
$30,000-$34,999
$35,000-$39,999
$40,000-$44,999
$45,000 or more

Thank you for your time and careful attention.

APPENDIX B

The following is a list of the daily newspapers in Maryland. For each paper, the total number of editors surveyed and the number of responses are listed.

The Capital (Annapolis)

Number of editors surveyed: 13
- Number of males: 9
- Number of females: 4

Number of editors responding: 7 (53.8 percent)
- Number of males: 4
- Number of females: 3

The Sun (Baltimore)

Number of editors surveyed: 19
- Number of males: 16
- Number of females: 2

Number of editors responding: 7 (36.8 percent)
- Number of males: 6
- Number of females: 1

The Evening Sun (Baltimore)

Number of editors surveyed: 25
- Number of males: 20
- Number of females: 5

Number of editors responding: 9 (36 percent)
- Number of males: 8
- Number of females: 1

The Daily Banner (Cambridge)

Number of editors surveyed: 3
- Number of males: 2
- Number of females: 1

Number of editors responding: 1 (33 percent)
- Number of males: 1
- Number of females: 0

The Cumberland Times-News (Cumberland)

Number of editors surveyed: 7
- Number of males: 5
- Number of females: 1
- Unclear from name: 1

Number of editors responding: 2 (28 percnet)
- Number of males: 2
- Number of females: 0

The Star Democrat (Easton)

Number of editors surveyed: 9
    Number of males: 5
    Number of females: 4
Number of editors responding: 6 (66.6 percent)
    Number of males: 2
    Number of females: 4

The Cecil Whig (Elkton)

Number of editors surveyed: 3
    Number of males: 3
    Number of females: 0
Number of editors responding: 2 (66.6 percent)
    Number of males: 2
    Number of females: 0

The Frederick Post (m)
The News (e) (Frederick)

Number of editors surveyed: 10
    Number of males: 9
    Number of females: 1
Number of editors responding: 7 (70 percent)
    Number of males: 7
    Number of females: 0

The Morning Herald (m)
The Daily Mail (e) (Hagerstown)

Number of editors surveyed: 13
    Number of males: 9
    Number of females: 4
Number of editors responding: 9 (69.2 percent)
    Number of males: 7
    Number of females: 2

The Prince George's Journal (Lanham)

Number of editors surveyed: 14
    Number of males: 10
    Number of females: 1
    Unclear from name: 2
Number of editors responding: 6 (42.8 percent)
    Number of males: 5
    Number of females: 1

The Montgomery Journal (Rockville)

Number of editors surveyed: 9
    Number of males: 5
    Number of females: 4
Number of editors responding: 6 (66.6 percent)
    Number of males: 4
    Number of females: 2

The Daily Times (Salisbury)

Number of editors surveyed: 8
    Number of males: 6
    Number of females: 2
Number of editors responding: 1 (12 percent)
    Number of males: 1
    Number of females: 0

Carroll County Times (Westminster)

Number of editors surveyed: 8
    Number of males: 6
    Number of females: 2
Number of editors responding: 7 (87.5 percent)
    Number of males: 5
    Number of females: 2

APPENDIX C

OVERALL RESULTS
Valid percentages

RANKING	STORY A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
1	18.8	36.2	13.2	0.0	7.4	0.0	0.0	15.9	5.9	0.0	1.5	1.5
2	10.1	10.1	30.9	2.9	5.9	1.5	6.0	18.8	7.4	0.0	13.2	0.0
3	20.3	10.1	11.8	2.9	5.9	0.0	13.4	15.9	7.4	1.5	2.9	5.9
4	10.1	7.2	8.8	7.2	10.3	4.5	10.4	20.3	10.3	9.0	4.4	1.5
5	13.0	1.4	14.7	1.4	19.1	6.0	7.5	8.7	8.8	6.0	8.8	2.9
6	7.2	5.8	10.3	2.9	10.3	4.5	9.0	5.8	16.2	10.4	8.8	7.4
7	7.2	5.8	5.9	11.6	2.9	16.4	6.0	7.2	7.4	16.4	5.9	8.8
8	4.3	4.3	2.9	8.7	14.7	7.5	7.5	5.8	13.2	6.0	8.8	14.7
9	1.4	8.7	1.5	14.5	8.8	11.9	7.5	1.4	7.4	13.4	13.2	11.8
10	4.3	2.9	0.0	11.6	7.4	16.4	7.5	0.0	10.3	11.9	8.8	17.6
11	2.9	4.3	0.0	24.6	2.9	11.9	20.9	0.0	2.9	7.5	11.8	5.9
12	0.0	2.9	0.0	11.6	4.4	19.4	4.5	0.0	2.9	17.9	11.8	22.1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

RESULTS FROM MALE EDITORS
Valid percentages

RANKING	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
1	17.0	34.0	17.3	0.0	7.7	0.0	0.0	18.9	3.8	0.0	1.9	0.0
2	9.4	11.3	30.8	3.8	5.8	2.0	7.8	18.9	3.8	0.0	13.5	0.0
3	18.9	7.5	13.5	1.9	7.7	0.0	13.7	15.1	9.6	2.0	3.8	5.8
4	9.4	9.4	9.6	7.5	11.5	3.9	7.8	17.0	9.6	11.8	5.8	1.9
5	15.1	1.9	7.7	1.9	17.3	7.8	7.8	9.4	9.6	7.8	9.6	1.9
6	7.5	7.5	11.5	3.8	9.6	5.9	9.8	7.5	11.5	7.8	7.7	7.7
7	9.4	5.7	3.8	15.0	1.9	13.7	2.0	7.5	9.6	17.6	7.7	7.7
8	5.7	1.9	3.8	9.4	13.5	5.9	7.8	5.7	17.3	2.0	11.5	13.5
9	0.0	9.4	1.9	15.1	9.6	13.7	5.9	0.0	9.6	11.8	13.5	11.5
10	5.7	1.9	0.0	7.5	9.6	19.6	7.8	0.0	9.6	9.8	5.8	21.2
11	1.9	5.7	0.0	22.6	1.9	9.8	25.5	0.0	3.8	7.8	7.7	7.7
12	0.0	3.8	0.0	11.3	3.8	17.6	3.9	0.0	1.9	21.6	11.5	21.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

RESULTS FROM FEMALE EDITORS
Valid percentages

RANKING	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
1	25.0	43.8	0.0	0.0	6.3	0.0	0.0	6.3	12.5	0.0	0.0	6.3
2	12.5	6.3	31.3	0.0	6.3	0.0	0.0	18.8	18.8	0.0	12.5	0.0
3	25.0	18.8	6.3	6.3	0.0	0.0	12.5	18.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.3
4	12.5	0.0	6.3	6.3	6.3	6.3	18.8	31.3	12.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
5	6.3	0.0	37.5	0.0	25.0	0.0	6.3	6.3	6.3	0.0	6.3	6.3
6	6.3	0.0	6.3	0.0	12.5	0.0	6.3	0.0	31.3	18.8	12.5	6.3
7	0.0	6.3	12.5	0.0	6.3	25.0	18.8	6.3	0.0	12.5	0.0	12.5
8	0.0	12.5	0.0	6.3	18.8	12.5	6.3	6.3	0.0	18.8	0.0	18.8
9	6.3	6.3	0.0	12.5	6.3	6.3	12.5	6.3	0.0	18.8	12.5	12.5
10	0.0	6.3	0.0	25.0	0.0	6.3	6.3	0.0	12.5	18.8	18.8	6.3
11	6.3	0.0	0.0	31.3	6.3	18.8	6.3	0.0	0.0	6.3	25.0	0.0
12	0.0	0.0	0.0	12.5	6.3	25.0	6.3	0.0	6.3	6.3	12.5	25.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

APPENDIX D

STORIES CHOSEN FOR PAGE ONE
Valid percentages

Editors could list up to six stories that they expected their newspaper would put on page one. The table indicates the percentage overall of how many editors expected the story to appear on page one, as well as the percentage of male editors and the percentage of female editors who expected the story to appear on page one.

STORY	OVERALL	MALES	FEMALES
A	79.7	77.3	87.5
B	72.4	75.0	71.6
C	86.9	93.7	84.9
D	18.8	12.5	20.7
E	62.3	43.7	67.9
F	7.2	0.0	9.4
G	34.7	50.0	30.0
H	98.5	93.7	100.0
I	59.4	87.5	50.9
J	17.3	0.0	22.6
K	37.6	18.7	43.5
L	26.0	37.5	22.0

On naming rape victims: How editors stand on the issue

Samuel P. Winch

doctoral student

School of Journalism

Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana

presented to the

Commission on the Status of Women at the AEJMC Annual Convention,

Boston, Massachusetts, August, 1991.

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On naming rape victims: How editors stand on the issue

Introduction:

As you all probably know, the issue of whether to name rape victims became a topic of great debate in newsrooms around the country about a year and a half ago when Geneva Overholser, the editor of the *Des Moines Register,* argued in an op ed piece in the *New York Times* in July, 1989, that rape victims should be named. She also ran the piece in her paper. Three weeks later, a woman named Nancy Ziegenmeyer came to see Overholser and told her she wanted the story of her rape told, names and all. In February, 1990, the *Register* published the story of Nancy Ziegenmeyer's rape, and suddenly found itself the source of much discussion. They subsequently won a Pulitzer prize for the series. More recently, in April 1991, the *New York Times* and several other newspapers were criticized for naming the victim of an alleged rape by William Kennedy Smith in Florida.

In 1989, Overholser had argued that the best way to defeat the problem of the stigma of rape is to openly confront it with the identification of rape victims. She argued that if rape victims are treated like other innocent crime victims, the stigma will evaporate. I wanted to see how many of her colleagues would agree, so, in the spirit of the ambulance-chasing researcher, I conducted a survey of city and metro editors at U.S. daily newspapers.

What I wanted to find:

This study had two main objectives. The first was to see what the current policies are concerning the naming of rape victims, to see what the editors thought the policies should be, and to see how circulation size, presence of competition, and other demographic factors of editors helped in predicting these policies and beliefs.

The second objective was to see what drove editors' opinions of what the policies should be concerning the naming of rape victims. The first objective was easy to accomplish.

The second was more difficult. To attempt to find out what drove their opinions, I included a series of questions to evaluate their attitudes toward different ethical principles and theories.

Dave Boeyink, an ethicist at Indiana University, helped me identify several different ethical arguments for and against naming rape victims. The respondents were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with each of these different arguments.

I developed five hypotheses: From previous studies I knew that most editors support the view that rape victims should not be identified or should be given the choice of whether to be identified. For that reason, I expected a focus of concern and compassion for the victim to be the dominant one, over both professional concerns and appeals to other ethical norms, including utility and principle, when these norms conflict with compassion for the victim.

Because editors as a rule do not receive training in ethical principles and theories, I expected that most would accept any ethical argument that agreed with their position when they were arguing that position. I assumed that most editors are practice-oriented, not reason-oriented: they understand and uphold the practice, but they do not concern themselves with the ethical reasons.

Gender differences were expected. I expected women to argue more for allowing rape victims the choice of being named simply because most victims are women.

I also expected that editors from larger newspapers would be more likely to think naming rape victims is acceptable because they are located in larger, more pluralistic cities where crime is more common, readers are more cosmopolitan, and the pressure from readers should be less direct.

Along the same line, I expected that editors from newspapers that have competing daily papers in their city would be more likely to think naming rape victims is acceptable, because of the pressure of trying to outdo, or "scoop" their competition.

Hypotheses:

H_1 *Most will agree with arguments that show compassion for the victim.*
H_2 *Most will agree with whatever ethical argument/principle that follows their policy.*
H_3 *Women will be more likely to argue for giving rape victims the choice of being named.*

H_4 Editors at larger newspapers will be more likely to argue for naming rape victims.
H_5 Presence of competition will make editors more likely to argue for naming rape victims.

Why it is important:

The basic reason for dissecting the attitudes toward this issue is that it has never been done before. The different ethical theories and streams of thought, such as Mill's utilitarianism, Kantian absolute principles, and situationalism, have never been identified, isolated and measured in the attitudes of journalists. Previous studies have merely measured how many newspapers are naming rape victims, and how many journalists feel they should be named, without trying to find out why. So, the main purpose of this study was to find out why journalists feel the way they do about naming rape victims, in terms of established ethical principles. In addition, of course, the documentation of changes in attitudes and policies due to the *Des Moines Register* series was intriguing.

What has been done before:

In 1985, Texas educators Rita Wolf, Tommy Thomason, and Paul LaRocque found that in a hypothetical situation, only 1.8 percent of the respondents would publish a rape victim's name and address, and .9 percent would only publish her name.[1] These researchers concluded that fewer and fewer newspapers were willing to name rape victims, and that in the five years since the same questions had been posed by the researchers in an earlier survey, the number of editors advocating the naming of rape victims had decreased, and fewer editors were giving street addresses of other crime victims.

Oukrop conducted a survey of journalists in 1982-83 that started to answer the question of why journalists feel the way they do about rape coverage.[2] One-quarter of the respondents to her survey agreed that rape trial testimony should be reported in detail so communities will know how widespread rape is. Two-thirds agreed that victims have a public responsibility to report rape to authorities. Only 16 percent agreed that "Newspapers perpetuate a stigma against rape victims by not covering rape fully."

The popular literature gives examples of some of the ethical arguments used in the debate of this issue. In particular, I looked at three types of arguments: appeals to utility, to compassion, and to duty or principles.

Philip Meyer, a journalism educator and researcher from the University of North Carolina, writes that in privacy cases such as rape,

> ...the utilitarian solution is particularly inefficient. These are cases where the revelation of embarrassing or painful private facts cause intense pain to a few while the immediate benefit for the many is both slight and diffuse. The Judeo-Christian injunction to treat others as you yourself would want to be treated or Immanuel Kant's admonition to let your actions set a standard for the world, or John Rawls's proposal to make decisions as if you were ignorant of which role you would ultimately play in the transaction under consideration—any of these might prove a better guide to such cases than utilitarian thinking.[3]

Yet, with naming rape victims, journalists on both sides of the issue have argued on utilitarian grounds. They say either that if the names are published, eventually the special stigma of rape will fade away, or that if the names are not published, more victims will come forward to report the crime to police, reducing the number of free-roaming rapists and the number of unreported rapes.[4]

The Judeo-Christian entreaty to "do unto others as you would have them do unto you," embodies the value of compassion for the individual. Many of those who argue against publication invoke the principle of compassion. Roy Peter Clark, associate director of the Poynter Institute, said "At the moment of trauma, the victim may need any combination of companionship, consolation, medical care, psychological counseling, the feeling that justice is possible, and a restored sense of balance," and sometimes "victims need protection from additional trauma, which in some cases may mean protection from the press."[5] Clark represents a compassionate, victim-oriented view.

Principles of duty have also been applied to this issue in several different ways. Some argue that it is a duty of journalists to provide accurate information and to report the truth completely to the public, and to not report rape victims' names amounts to self-censorship or suppression of the news.[6]

Others argue it is the duty of all people to respect the privacy and dignity of others—to not exploit them or use them to reach an end.[7]. Those applying this rule might say it is wrong to name victims in the hope of reducing stigma on future rape victims because that is using, or exploiting, current victims to reach the goal of reducing the stigma of rape.

Still others argue that naming victims is necessary for fairness and balance, because alleged rapists are named, so not naming the accusers amounts to uneven coverage.[8] Similarly, lawyers argue that keeping victims' names secret makes fair trials for alleged rapists more difficult.[9]

Other journalists have said that once one media outlet has used the name of a rape victim, their policies of keeping the identity secret do not need to be followed.[10]

Finally, there is an argument for letting rape victims decide for themselves whether to be named: giving victims the choice gives them a feeling of power over what happens in their lives. This feeling of empowerment might help heal the emotional wounds of rape.[11]

As stated before, one of the purposes of this study was to use some of these types of arguments, along with others, to attempt to quantify the salience of the different ethical arguments, and to determine the ethical theories and principles that editors use to approach the issue and to justify their practices.

What I did:

A stratified random sample of 288 newspapers was taken from the *Editor & Publisher International Yearbook, 1990*. The sample was stratified for size, so that an equal number of small (25,000 or less weekday circulation), medium (25,001 to 100,000 weekday circulation) and large (100,001 + weekday circulation) newspapers were included. This was because I wanted to see if the size of the newspaper was a predictive factor, and I needed a larger than standard sample of large and medium newspapers. In actuality, small papers outnumber medium sized four-to-one, and large papers fifteen-to-one.[12]

Questionnaires were mailed on November 9, 1990 to the city or metro editor at these newspapers, or if none were listed, to the news editor, managing editor, or other editors. City and metro editors were chosen because they are the ones who most commonly face the issue of whether to name a victim of rape.[13] The questionnaires, which fit on two sides of a standard sheet of paper, included standard demographic questions about the editors and their papers, as well as questions about attitudes toward naming rape victims and questions that sought to identify the ethical principles inherent in these attitudes. A cover letter explained the importance of the study and attempted to engage the editors to reply.

A week later, reminder postcards were mailed. By the end of December, 1990, 158 responses had been received, for a 54.9 percent response rate.

What I found:

First the first objective. It looks like editors are softening their hard line on not naming victims. (Remember the Texans found that in a hypothetical situation, only 1.8 percent of the respondents would publish a rape victim's name and address, and .9 percent would only publish her name.) In the current study, nearly half (39.7 percent) of the respondents favored giving rape victims the choice of being named, while 7.1 percent of the respondents believed rape victims should regularly be identified in news stories, and 43.6 percent said names should be used only in exceptional cases.[14]

Table 1. Percentage of responses to the question: "When should rape victims be named?"

(Number responding=156)	Percent
Never	9.6
With their permission	39.7
Only in exceptional cases	43.6
Regularly	7.1

Table 2. Percentage of respondents describing their newspaper's policy on naming rape victims:

(Number responding=153)	Percent
We never print them	41.2
Only in exceptional cases (i.e. kidnapped, etc.)	37.3
Only when they agree to be named	6.5
Only when they request that we name them	5.2
Only when they agree *and* it is an exceptional case	4.6
We decide case by case	3.3
When accused is acquitted	1.3
When accused is convicted	0.7

Many newspapers (41.2 percent) do not name rape victims under any circumstances. (See Table 2.) However, the majority of newspapers adhere to policies that allow the naming of rape victims under certain "exceptional" circumstances. Only three of the newspapers surveyed actually have a policy of regularly naming rape victims, and then only when the accused rapist is either convicted or acquitted.

Editors generally agree with their newspaper's policies, but editors who work at newspapers with absolute bans on naming rape victims are less likely to agree with the policies. 28.6 percent of those respondents who work at newspapers with an absolute ban on naming rape victims disagree with their newspaper's policy, while only 12.5 percent of those who work at newspapers with a less strict policy disagree with it.

The majority of respondents (84.2 percent) said their newspaper's policy on naming rape victims was more strict than the policy on naming victims of other violent crimes. (See Table 3.)

Table 3. Percentage describing how their newspaper's policy on naming rape victims differs from the policy on naming victims of other violent crimes:

(Number responding=152)	Percent
We regularly name other victims	84.2
We don't name other victims either	6.6
Our policy doesn't differ	5.3
Our policy differs in various other ways	3.9

As expected, most newspapers name the victims of violent crimes other than rape. It is this differential treatment of rape that concerns many editors and writers on the subject.

Obviously, however, editors balance the need for parity among crime victims with the desire to show special compassion to rape victims. Additionally, reader feedback controls newspaper policies to some degree. Several editors commented on their questionnaires that their communities would be in an uproar if they named rape victims.

An editor at a small Texas daily wrote that his community and subscribers are violently opposed to using the names of rape victims. He speculated that his community was more opposed to naming rape victims than are the victims themselves.

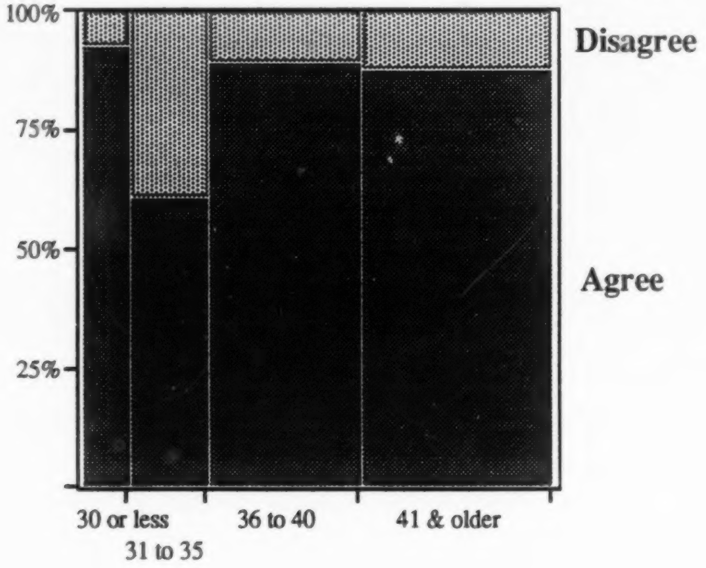
Surprisingly, not very many newspapers are willing to be aggressive by asking rape victims for the permission to use their names. As a matter of fact, 5.2 percent of the respondents said their paper's policy was to name rape victims only if the victim made an issue out of it and asked to be named. (See Table 2.) Evidently, a few newspapers are protecting some victims who don't want to be protected.

The data was analyzed to see if either the paper's policy toward the publication of rape victims' names or the editor's opinion on the issue were related to other variables, such as size of newspaper, presence of competing newspapers, and gender, age, education, and experience of respondents. Although no statistically significant relationships could be established, both newspaper policy ($p < .09$) and respondent's opinion on naming rape victims ($p < .06$) showed weak relationships to the presence of a competing daily newspaper. Briefly, it appears that newspapers without direct print competition, and the editors who work at them are more likely to believe rape victims should be named in certain cases. Competition seems to make newspapers and their editors more cautious on this issue. This could be due to competitors bringing up the issue of the ethical treatment of victims, and stressing the importance of compassion toward victims in their circulation/competition area, perhaps leading to newspapers trying to "out compassion" the competition.

None of the other attributes—size of newspaper, gender, age, education and experience of respondent—appear to be related to how editors and their newspapers approach the issue of rape victim identification. But some are related to other factors, such as age of respondent being related to agreement with policy.

Those in the 31- to 35-year-old age group were much more likely to disagree with their newspaper's policy. Figure 1. shows the relative percentage of respondents in each age group who answered "yes" or "no" to the question: "Do you agree with [your newspaper's policy on naming rape victims]?

Figure 1. Percentage of agreement with rape publication policy by age group



pearsonian chi square = 11.317 df=3 p<.02
(The areas of the bars in the chart above correspond to the number of respondents in each category. There were 23 respondents in the 31 to 35 year-old category)

The reason editors in the 31- to 35-year-old age group are much more likely to disagree with their newspaper's policy is not clear, though we could speculate that it might have something to do with ideologies learned at specific ages. These editors were all in high school and junior high school when the great social issues of the late 1960s and early 1970s were occurring, such as the Vietnam War, student protest, civil rights and Watergate. As a result they might feel more strongly about openness and complete reporting. This is purely speculative and is an area ripe for further investigation. David Weaver indicated that he and G.C. Wilhoit found a similar correlation during the research for their book, *The American Journalist.*[15]

Now, to the second objective: identifying the ethical values used by editors to justify their beliefs and opinions on this issue.

The questionnaire was formulated with the intention of identifying the ethical principles underlying the respondent's view on the issue. Although some respondents undoubtedly agreed with every argument against publication of names and disagreed with every argument for publication (and some did vice-versa), the results indicate that certain arguments were either more salient or pertinent to those arguing either side of the issue.

The following arguments allowed responses along a Likert-type scale of agreement, from "agree strongly" to "disagree strongly":

Arguments:

1. Rape victims should not be named because they would suffer from a stigma that victims of other violent crimes do not share. [Judeo-Christian compassion]
2. We should not name rape victims because publication of names might cause other rape victims to avoid reporting to authorities what has happened to them. [Utilitarian]
3. Because of journalism's special duty to be fair and balanced, rape victims should be named when the accused rapist is named. [Professional duty]
4. The principles of complete and accurate reporting require that we name rape victims whenever possible. [Professional duty]
5. Rape victims should be named because publication will lessen the stigma of rape on future victims. [Utilitarian]
6. Rape victims should not be named even for the cause of reducing the stigma of rape because that exploits rape victims. [Kant's universal principle that the ends do not justify the means]

7. We should name rape victims because the names are a part of public court and police records and the public has a right to know what is happening in the community and to whom. [Professional duty]

8. It is OK to name rape victims who have been already identified by other media outlets. [Casuist]

9. Decisions to name rape victims can be made only on a case-by-case basis. [Situationalist]

10. We should name rape victims only in special cases, such as: when they have been murdered; when they are public figures; when they are also kidnapped. [Casuist]

11. We should allow rape victims the choice of being named because this choice will serve to empower those who have a severe feeling of dis-empowerment. [Judeo-Christian compassion]

A factor analysis of the answers to these different arguments failed to extract any factors that could be explained by ethical theories. Instead, the two significant factors that resulted can be explained only as correlations between arguments for and against naming rape victims. In other words, editors do not seem to play favorites with ethical theories. If an argument supports their current practice, they embrace it as a good argument. If it does not, they reject it. This practice-oriented approach to justifying their opinions is probably typical of journalists who have not been educated in formal ethical theory, and we presume most have not. If they had, they might not have given the somewhat contradictory answers that this representative sample did. Future studies seeking to unravel (through factor analysis) the ethical principles at work beneath complex moral issues would probably be more successful on issues that are more evenly divided (such as whether anonymous sources should be used). In the case of naming rape victims, the vast majority think victims should not regularly be named.

Although this part of the findings was disappointing in that it was apparent that journalists are inconsistent in applying ethical theories, it was interesting to see the attitudinal trends that emerged toward the different arguments. For example, one of the most significant findings is that the journalistic values of complete and balanced reporting and the public's right to know were all discounted by the majority of respondents, to the benefit of the victims.

For instance, 86.5 percent of the respondents disagreed that journalism's duty to provide balance requires the naming of rape victims. Only 11 percent of the respondents said the principle of complete reporting required identifying rape victims. Most (85.7 percent) disagreed with the argument that because victim names are a part of public records and because the public has a right to know what is happening in the community the names should be published. Even on the question of whether it is OK to name rape victims whose names other media have previously published, 81.6 percent said that it is not.

However, on one professional value, that of editors making decisions on a case-by-case basis, 75.7 percent said that decisions to name rape victims can only be made that way, indicating a reliance on situational ethics, and a concern for the profession's editorial freedom when making these types of decisions.

The majority, 79.6 percent, also agreed that rape victims should only be identified in specific exceptional cases, such as when they have also been murdered, they are a public figure, or they have been kidnapped. Interestingly, a cross-tabulation shows that 12 out of 14 of the respondents who said rape victims should never be identified agreed with this argument, showing that their "never" answer to the question of "When to name" does have its exceptions. We could conclude from this that only two respondents from the entire sample would actually advocate never identifying rape victims.

In Summary:

Hypothesis 1, that concern for the victim is paramount, was supported primarily in the question on stigma, but not as strongly on the questions on exploitation and empowerment. Hypothesis 2 was definitely supported. Most editors were willing to agree with any argument that supported their view and to disagree with any argument that didn't. Hypothesis 3 was not supported. On all of the questions, female editors did not show any significant difference in their responses from the male respondents. Furthermore, age, educational level and years worked in journalism all predict very little in the responses to the ethical arguments.

Hypothesis 4 was not supported. The size of the newspaper at which they work does not seem to have any effect on the way editors feel about this issue.

However, editors who come from a paper that does not have to deal with a competing paper are more likely to argue for the naming of rape victims, directly refuting Hypothesis 5, and showing that presence of competition tends to make editors less daring on this issue, which seems anomalous to other research on the effects of competition. Presence of a competing paper does not, however, predict whether respondents would publish a name that had already been identified by another media outlet, as would logically be expected.

Perhaps the most interesting result is that although there is currently a national debate over whether to publish rape victims' names, and although the debate has been largely one-sided—from those who argue that open discussion is a necessary part of the process of de-stigmatizing rape—this argument as well as others in support of naming the victims has made an impact only at some leading newspapers, such as the *New York Times*, the Louisville *Courier-Journal*, and of course, the *Des Moines Register*. The argument does not seem to have made much of an impact on editors at most American daily newspapers.

Finally, this study suggests that most newspaper editors have not reasoned through the ethical principles involved in the issue, but have focused on justifying their current practices with any principle that seems handy. The intensity of the current debate over naming William Kennedy Smith's alleged victim might change that situation by elevating the discussion to include a consideration of competing ethical principles. We hope it does.

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Notes:

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[1] Rita Wolf, Tommy Thomason and Paul LaRocque. "The Right to Know vs. the Right of Privacy: Newspaper Identification of Crime Victims," Journalism Quarterly 64(2): 503-507 (1987).

[2] Oukrop, Carol. "Views of Newspaper Gatekeepers on Rape and Rape Coverage." Unpublished report presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Oregon State University, August 1983. Oukrop did a follow-up comparison study with rape crisis center workers in "Views of Members of the National Coalition Against Sexual Abuse and of Newspaper Gatekeepers on Rape and Rape Coverage." Unpublished report, May, 1984.

[3] Meyer, Philip. Ethical Journalism, New York: Longman, 1987., p. 85.

[4] Deni Elliott and Geneva Overholser, among others, have argued the utilitarian argument that not naming the victim contributes to the notion that they are somehow to blame, so naming will reduce the stigma eventually. Meanwhile workers at rape crisis centers have argued the other side—that publication will cause rape victims to not report the crime to the police, in order to avoid the stigma and embarrassment (see Elliott, Deni. "Anonymity for rape victims... should the rules change?" FineLine 1(2):1, 2., Paine, Sylvia. "Geneva," Washington Journalism Review, September 1990, p. 25., and DeSilva, Bruce. "The gang-rape story," Columbia Journalism Review, May/June 1984, 42-43.).

[5] Roy Peter Clark. "Covering Crime: Journalists face difficult choices," in Crime Victims & the News Media, Tommy Thomason and Anatha Babbili, eds. Fort Worth, Texas: Fort Worth Star-Telegram, 1986.

[6] DeSilva, pp. 42-43.

[7] This an argument similar to Immanuel Kant's "kingdom of ends." See Bernard. Rosen, Ethics Companion. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1990. p. 57.

[8] "One Who Will Print Names of Rape Victims," The Quill, February 1978, 8.

[9] DeSilva, p. 43.

[10] DeSilva, p. 42.

[11] Carol Polsgrove, personal communication, October 2, 1990.

[12] Papers were selected for the sample by starting with a random number from the beginning of the daily newspaper listing, then selecting every 11th small paper, every 4th medium paper, and 4 out of every 5 of the large papers. This method provided a sample of 288 papers, just shy of the 300 sought.

[13] Sometimes it was an Assistant or Associate Managing Editor-Metro. Other times, there was no listing for city or metro editor. In those cases, questionnaires were sent to either "news editor," "local news editor," "local editor," or finally, "managing editor." If the paper was larger than 10,000 circulation and no local or city or metro editor was listed, I sent the questionnaire to "City Editor," at the newspaper in question. The reason for this is that I assumed most papers over 10,000 have a city editor, but the

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names may not be listed in the yearbook. For smaller papers, I sent it to either the editor or managing editor if no local editors were listed.

[14] The definition of what was exceptional varied among respondents. Some said that only when the victim is dead, as in a murder victim who was also raped, should the name be used. (In future surveys, researchers should make the distinction in their questionnaires of whether to name living rape victims.) Others said that when the victim comes forward, makes her story public and desires public attention, such as in the Ziegenmeyer case at the *Des Moines Register*, then the case is exceptional enough to warrant identifying the victim. Another said if the victim was Barbara Bush it would be exceptional enough.

[15] Personal communication, April, 1991.